VISUALITY AND THE TRANSNATIONAL URBAN SPACE: KOREATOWN, LOS ANGELES

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Through an ethnographic study (semi-structured interviews, participant observation, photography, and archival research) of Koreatown in Los Angeles, I examine how visuality and countervisuality influence the transnational urban space of Koreatown, Los Angeles. Based on Nicholas Mirzoeff's (2011) concepts of visuality and countervisuality, and by incorporating perspectives of globalization, specifically treatment of cities under globalization, the study shows how the construction of the space itself is both the result and could be the catalyst for production of power for its transnational and immigrant communities as well as for other, often more powerful, networks of power that are able to harness it. There is a dialectical relationship between construction of space and production of power intensified by the intersectionality of the transnational and immigrant communities. An examination of the transnational history of Korean migration and the transnational political activities that shaped the Korean and Korean American communities shows Koreatown to be constructed and is continuously shaped through these transnational movements and moments. Understanding how visuality manifests in Koreatown illustrates how powerful entities in Koreatown and Los Angeles have and continues to impose control over shaping the space, often for their own benefit regardless of the demands of the communities in Koreatown. They change the shape of Koreatown and effectively control how Koreatown is seen, exerting power politically and financially to cultivate, sustain, and legitimize their authority, while harnessing the increasing value of the spaces fueled by Koreatown's spatial identity. The process of the increasing creation of value of Koreatown is evidenced in countervisuality, as a result of how it manifests in Koreatown. The transnational and immigrant communities such as the Korean and Korean American communities work to assert their right to

look and right to be seen through constructing a consumable space which could lead to a claimable space, which then can help accumulate a political voice for the communities. Through these discussions the study demonstrates that countervisuality and visuality do not necessarily work as binaries. Incorporating transnational and immigrant communities of color as actors and part of the subjects of study, the binary of powerful and powerless, which dominate in the discourse of visuality and countervisuality, becomes muddier and even further stratified. Together, these findings propose that the transnationality shaping and permeating through the space is in turn shaped and perpetuated by the local constructions of the space, and as it becomes a claimable space, Koreatown can be a source of production of power for its various transnational and immigrant communities.

DEDICATION

사랑하는 엄마 아빠에게 이 논문을 바칩니다.

I dedicate my dissertation to my parents, Il Man Kim (김일만) and Bok Ran Kim (김복란).

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As April turned to May in 1992, Los Angeles went up in flames. To be specific, some of the most disenfranchised communities' spaces went up in flames that day. Koreatown was one of the hardest-hit areas, and Korean businesses were hit disproportionately in and outside of Koreatown. This event has framed Koreatown ever since, although the historical transnational moments that preceded it still reverberate today. I have watched Koreatown's metamorphosis since my family and I immigrated to the area, on the heels of 4.29[1] (pronounced Sa-I-Gu). This is the only Koreatown I have ever known, and the initial images of storefronts with burn marks, the wood that boarded windows and doors, the sounds of people crying on television, and the suffocating weight of tensions permeating this strange new home became a part of my introduction and socialization into the fabric of the United States. Many Korean Americans speak of Sa-I-Gu as a moment of catalyst for the development of their identity and politics, and it has certainly shaped my own, and subsequently, the construction of this dissertation. Sa-I-Gu is one of several examples that changed Koreatown as a space and its transnational and immigrant communities, and the processes and consequences involved in these shifts are the focus of this project.

Research on transnational and immigrant spaces have often focused on constructions of ethnic enclaves (Caldiera 1996); racial and ethnic group relations (Joyce 2003); transnational exchanges of migrants with their "homeland" (Glick Schiller 2005); and political, social, and geographic segregations (Jennings 1994; Ong, Bonacich, and Cheng 1994). Additionally, literature on transnational urban spaces and cities often focus on border-crossings (Smith and

[1] There are multiple names for the upheaval — 1992 Los Angeles Riots, Rodney King Riots, 1992 LA Civil Unrest, and the South Central Riots. "4.29" refers to the date, a style that some

Guarnizo 1998; Faist 2004), as well as rooted in abstract discussions of the power of the state and (de)territorialization (Basch et al., 1994; Ho 2011; Collier and King 2015). However, less is discussed about the impact of local city governance on the everyday of the transnational and immigrant communities, and the spaces they claim and occupy. Thus, in my research, I sought to fill this gap by examining the overlaps of literature on global cities (Sassen 2005) and transnational urbanism (Smith 2001), power, and the visual.

In order to develop a better understanding of the relationships between the physical and the abstract in transnational urban space through the everyday of its communities, I use a theoretical framework based on notions of power and the visual. Mirzoeff (2011) refers to them as "visuality" and "countervisuality," which can be understood as conceptually similar to history and counterhistory, or master narrative and counter narrative. These concepts provide the tools through which the struggles for power to dictate who, what, how, and why people see, and in the context of this project these tools are used to excavate to highlight the tensions between the local governance that dictates policy in the physical shaping of Koreatown and the communities that have physically and symbolically built a transnational urban space called Koreatown. The findings suggest several shifts that are happening in Koreatown, including the move from an "ethnic enclave" to a space re-envisioned as a touristic space, as well as shifts in demographic populations through gentrification led by residential and, subsequently, commercial redevelopment. These few examples only show the tip of the contentious relationships between local governance and the transnational and immigrant communities in Koreatown, as they each struggle to shape the future of Koreatown, physically as well as how it is represented, imagined, and seen. This study of Koreatown helps formulate an understanding of the relationship between constructing spaces and producing power.

In order to empirically base the analytical propositions discussed, I chose to do field ethnographic work on Koreatown in Los Angeles. This endeavor offers an opportunity to shed light on the complexities of an oft-overlooked space. Despite its location and composition, as well as the unique history of the space in comparison to the area and the political ambiguity of predominantly transnational and immigrant communities of color within it, Koreatown has not been extensively examined.

Korean communities in Los Angeles have been seen through the lenses of labor and labor-organization discourses (Kwon 2010; Milkman, Bloom, and Narro 2010); immigration (Koo and Yu 1981; Ong, Bonacich, and Cheng 1994; Light and Bonacich 1998; Chang and Diaz-Veizades 1999; Kang 2010); the "middle-man minority" concept (Min 1996); and racial discourse and Sa-I-Gu (Yu 1990; Abelmann and Lie 1995; Min 1996; Waldinger and Bozogmehr 1996; Joyce 2003). The same is true of other Korean communities in the United States (Yu, Phillips, and Yang 1982; Light and Bonacich 1988; Abelmann and Lie 1995; Min 1996; K. Park 1997; Y. Kim 2003; S. Kim 2004; E. Park and J. Park 2005; N. Kim 2008; Kwon 2010; PERE 2012). However, not much has been written about Koreatown as a space or a visual space, or about the effects of transnational processes and other relations on the production of the space itself and vice versa. Hence, in order to understand the visible and invisible developments of the area, its seemingly constant growth through transnational capital flow, the transnational bodies that affect and move within it, as well as the construction of the space in relation to the production of power, examining Koreatown through the conceptual frame of transnational visual urban space is essential.

Koreatown in Los Angeles provides an invaluable site by which to empirically inform and base my theoretical and analytical propositions due to several factors. In recent years, it has

gone through space-altering changes: from the formalization of its boundaries, to installations of the urban markers, to redistricting, and an increase of property development projects, contrasts have emerged between the perceived notions of Koreatown and the populations of the area. Thus, increasing tensions have resulted from the shifts in Koreatown's prominence from a ghetto (Boyarsky 1977: I1) and enclave to a type of contested citadel[2], though its original categorizations are still sustained today making it different from standard citadels[3]. However, these tensions are reflective of the physical, or visible, constructions of the space itself, as well as the invisible forces and processes that are running beneath the visible layers of Koreatown. While it may be perceived that Koreatown is a Korean community, run by Koreans, with Korean stores (and owners), and with Korean markers in the area, the picture is far more complicated, contrasting what may be assumed about the space and concerning which communities have socio-political power.

The lengthy histories of transnational and immigrant Korean communities have contributed to the space that has developed as today's Koreatown. For several decades, at least from the 1940s and 1950s, the areas nearby became populated with Korean immigrants. From

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[2] Juliette Galonnier (2014) references Peter Marcuse's (1997) categorization of "segregated neighbourhoods: the ghetto, the enclave and the citadel" (94). Within this typology, they are distinguished from one another in terms of the "degree of willingness or constraint that leads to their formation" (*ibid.*), though these concepts are often tied to other focal points in various discourses. The ghetto is forced segregation, often referred to as inferior spaces and communities; the enclave is often deemed as voluntary segregation comprised of a particular population group; and the citadel is often class-based rather than ethno-racial categorizations, and is an exclusionary space, meaning the "[g]enerally upper-class and dominant, [and these] minority retreats into defensive spaces to protect its superior position" (Galonnier 2014:95).

[3] For example, Fremont Place[3], a private gated community located in Hancock Park which is an affluent neighborhood that exists just beyond Koreatown's western boundaries. Fremont Place is considered to be the oldest gated community in Los Angeles, the first of the 73 houses built in the 1910s. Its earliest tenants included a movie star (Mary Pickford), founder of Bank of America (A.P. Giannini), Gillette razor manufacturer (King C. Gillette), and industrialists in oil and metal.

the 1970s, Korean immigrants (Rodriguez 2009) "began transforming the city's core [. . .] from a depressed neighborhood into what is today a business and social hub so large and dotted with so many Korean-language signs." The area has undergone dramatic changes since the 1992 upheaval and which continue still, with increasing South Korean investments. Along with the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, the shifts in the South Korean economy in the 1990s as well as relatively new laws in South Korea that lifted the individual international investment caps in 2007 (the cap was entirely dissolved in 2009) has led to an increase in both flow of people and investment capital (Kirk 2007). These factors have affected the demographics of the neighborhood, and today, Koreatown has the largest concentration of Korean and Korean American people in the United States, yet it is noted for its dense population that represents various ethnic identities across almost all races.

With a current population of 116,657 within its disputed 2.7 square miles, Koreatown is the densest neighborhood in Los Angeles, its population is composed of over 92% people of color, with a large immigrant population with about 64% of its residents being immigrants, with nearly 48% ineligible to vote in city, state, and national elections. Los Angeles is the second-most populous city in the US, housing an immense minority majority population. According to the 2010 Census, of its population of nearly 3.8 million (3,792,622), the largest four racial groups represented in Los Angeles are Hispanic (48.5%), non-Hispanic white (28.7%), Asian (11.3%), and non-Hispanic black (9.6%) in its 503 square miles. Koreatown's largest four racial groups represented are Hispanic, Asian, white, and black. The composition of the population (116,657) looks different than that of Los Angeles as a whole. For a point of comparison, the neighborhood to the east, Pico Union, known the Salvadoran Community Corridor (since 2012),

has about an 85% Hispanic population. Of the ethnic groups, Mexican (estimated 23-24%) and Korean (estimated 22-23%) make up nearly half of the population in the neighborhood.

There are 25 Hispanic/Latino ethnic groups represented in Koreatown. As mentioned, the Mexican community has the highest population at 43%. However, it is believed that most of that community in Koreatown is comprised of those from Oaxaca (scpr.org), a state in Mexico, which has a high concentration of indigenous population (53% of Mexico's indigenous population are there). The next two larger communities represented are Salvadoran and Guatemalan. There are 18 Asian ethnic groups represented in Koreatown, 67% comprising the Korean community, and the next largest group is the Filipino ethnic community at 20.2%.

There are nearly identical sizes of Mexican and Korean communities living in Koreatown. However, the space is dominated by billboards, stores, and office signs in Korean or Anglicized Korean words, signaling a core economic community of the area; gateway markers and other architecture, as well as the various events held in the area suggest a dominating Korean cultural community identity. According to a joint report by USC's Program for Environmental and Regional Equity and Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (Sanchez, et al. 2012), "In Koreatown, poverty is widespread and rates are higher than the region. 46% lives below 150% of the Federal Poverty line" (they chose 150% because they found that it was more representative for the area considering the high cost of living in Los Angeles). The report also indicated that there was an overall increase in median household income between 2000 and 2008, though it still hovers just above $36,000, making it close to the FPL. For a point of comparison, the neighborhood to the west of Koreatown, Hancock Park, has a median household income that is nearly double that amount. The report further suggests that the decrease in poverty is due to influx of wealthier residents, leading to new high-end condos and the displacement of the very

poor, increasing the number of well-settled, and perhaps more economically stable immigrants, as well as an increase in jobs from the growth of the service sector. Simultaneously, there has been an increase of the working poor in the area, nearly triple that of the rest of the county (17% versus 6%).

However, there have been noticeable shifts in the area's demographics in terms of how long its residents have been residing in the United States: two-thirds of Koreatown immigrants have been in the country for 10 years or more; in contrast, in 1990s, 74% of immigrants had been in the country for fewer than 10 years. Despite the official designation, economic growth, and diverse ethnic population, there is a sense of powerlessness among its residents, highlighted during the redistricting process this year when Koreatown was split between two districts despite much protest from the communities. These shifts, along with histories of the space and the Korean and Korean American transnational and immigrant communities, are just a few of the factors that shape the questions that drive this study.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The overarching research question is: how does the relationship between visuality and countervisuality manifest in transnational urban spaces? This question points to the necessity of understanding the relationship between constructions of the space and productions of power in transnational urban areas. Specifically, there are three components that help in exploring this question: 1) How do transnational urban spaces come into being? 2) How does visuality manifest in Koreatown? 3) How does countervisuality manifest in Koreatown?

METHODOLOGY

In order to pursue the questions I set forth, I implemented an ethnographic project, primarily from January 2013 to August 2013, which I conducted through photography, archival research, visual and textual analysis, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews. I continued non-interview components of the ethnography over the span of nearly three years, from September 2013 to 2016. I went back and spent time in the space during big events such as the Los Angeles Korean Fall Festival in 2013, and continued to follow developments unfolding in the area. In this project, the visible space is as important as the communities, and it becomes equally important to consider the visual social processes in order to develop nuanced understandings of formations of spaces. To examine the implications of the way the space has been constructed, the visual, methodologically, plays an invaluable role.

The visual is harnessed in two ways in this study: 1) as part of theoretical frame[4] to examine visual social processes; and 2) as part of the methodology. The concentration of "visual sociology" has not always had a place in mainstream sociology in the United States. Photographs, for example, were "banished […] in favour of more 'objective' statistical reports" (Harper 2000:504). The visual is often invalidated due to their "subjectivity and specificity" (Pink 2007:13), the lack of objectivity and, in some ways, the lack of reproducibility by another researcher. These contestations also exist across other fields that are concerned with the visual.

Gillian Rose, a geographer, stated, "there is no clearly established methodological framework to discuss the uses of photography in social science research," channeling Howard Becker [2004] (2007:239). These contestations and fluctuations regarding the place of the visual apply to the dispersed dimensions of visual sociology as well. From creating images to collecting

[4] Discussed further in the next chapter.

images and to analyzing images, not all visual sociologists engage in all of these methods. Another visual methodologist and sociologist, Douglas Harper (1988:55), said, "Visual sociology is a collection of approaches in which researchers use photographs to portray, describe, or analyze social phenomena." He identified two areas: "conventional sense of data gathering" and the other pertained to treating photographs and images as a cultural product as the object of study to show the versatility of utilizing a visual approach in sociological inquiry. While the distinction exists between taking and analyzing photographs, embracing both approaches is essential for a visual sociologist (Harper 1988). Pointing to Becker's notion of "lay theory," Harper (1988:55) contends that a certain amount of analysis exists, though some might argue that it is superficial, but even a sociologist who is taking photographs as part of a "conventional sense of data gathering" (1988:55) has made an analysis of whatever he or she is photographing in order to choose the object or subject to document.

In order to understand the composition of physical spaces within the boundaries of Koreatown as well as examine the visual social processes, I utilized two forms of visual methodologies: photography and archival research. I photographed façades in the area, including supermarkets, plazas, and other stores in Koreatown. I photographed sites at which I performed participant observation (plazas, stores, or meetings of organizations I followed, such as the Wilshire Center Koreatown Neighborhood Council). Throughout my stay in Los Angeles, I photographed these spaces and searched for archival materials (visual and textual) to understand the area's development and communities. I was allowed access to USC's Korean Heritage Library. In addition, I collected images and texts from newspapers, magazines, and other printed materials as well as blogs and other Internet sources, the USC and Metro archives. I then

examined the "visual images, verbal texts, institutions and social practices together" through discourse analysis (Rose 2008 [2007]: 146).

I conducted participant observations in plazas, markets, cafes, and other public spaces several times a week. Doing so allowed me to observe the relationships between spaces and people in them. How is the space navigated? Who is in the space? How is the space utilized? For example, Koreatown has three large "plazas," buildings with a very similar architecture: multiple levels surround a central atrium, and fountains on the ground floor can be viewed from each level. On weekends, people come to shop there because each of these plazas has a Korean supermarket, food court, bakery, coffee shops, bookstores, and music outlets, paper shops (selling notebooks, pens, and so on) as well as restaurants and retailers who sell clothing, beauty supplies, or other items. I went to these areas at varying times during the week and on weekends in order to cover as many sites on different days as possible. I conducted semi-structured interviews with members of cultural and community agencies in the area because they have a unique understanding of the area, as they continuously work with the communities in Koreatown. These included the My One Vote, Korean American Democratic Committee, Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance, and Koreatown Youth & Community Center.

I completed 32 semi-structured interviews in total, ranging between 50 minutes and 4 hours, between January and August of 2013. For all interviews, the general questions pertained to the respondents' (or the organization or agency's) relationships to Koreatown and its communities (e.g., "How long have you been aware of Koreatown?" or "How would you describe your [group/store/agency]'s relationship to Koreatown?"). Respondents were interviewed regarding their experiences in Koreatown, and the changes they have observed as well as those they envision. I asked all interviewees about how they visualize Koreatown through

questions that pertain to their everyday activities and interactions. The interview participants were primarily working within community organizations in Koreatown.

Visual ethnographies, similar to other methodological approaches, require a reflexive approach, understanding the positionality of the researcher and acknowledging the oft-conscious framing of the visual product. This is especially the case for uses of photographs in ethnographic research. One of the ways this has been harnessed in this study is through photographing within the various transnational and immigrant spaces of Koreatown as part of the ethnographic process. As it has been noted, photographs are "inherently ambiguous, their specifiable meanings emergent in the viewing process" (Schwartz 1989:122), but in the context of making ethnographic photography, the researcher's construction of the photographs play multiple roles. The photographs taken during my fieldwork do not provide an objective view of the space *per se*, but it is a representation of the observed space as part of the ethnography. They also are not quite subjective in the sense that only familiar spaces to me were photographed; multiple factors were part of choosing the photographed spaces and events, primarily informed by participant observation of Koreatown. Understanding how these spaces are visually constructed are ingrained within the photographs taken in the field, which I worked to present to challenge the stereotyped imageries of Koreatown, and more broadly, the so-called ethnic enclaves.

Methodological challenges

There are tensions in Koreatown between the Korean and Korean American communities and many of the Latino communities. This tension is generally based on class, intensified by

misinformation[5] and racist and ethnocentric perceptions that can permeate in the various communities. It leads to mistrust, which seemed impact how respondents, including potential respondents, interacted with me. For example, some Korean and Korean Americans worried that I would portray them in a negative light to discuss power dynamics in Koreatown, and would either self-censor during interviews or refuse to do interviews. Some non-Korean and non-Korean American individuals also self-censored or showed resistance during the interview, while others declined to participate. For some, I could not resolve their mistrust of my intentions[6]. However, I worked to built trust through being consistently present in meetings (e.g., neighborhood council meetings), which were most successful if I had been introduced through someone they trusted.

DISSERTATION CHAPTERS

The next chapter, Chapter 2, is a more detailed literature review. Through two sections, "Globalization and Treatment of Cities" and "Visual," first, I specifically examine three perspectives in globalization literatures: network and flows, borders and borderzones, and transnationalism, focusing on how cities are treated in the context of globalization. I then discuss the visual in three parts: visual culture (the broad sense of the relationship between the social and

[5] For example, a pair of college-age Latino youth conversed with me about how they felt that Koreatown should be called something else because not even ten percent of the Koreatown population is Korean. This type of lore is common in many communities, and often used to bolster one community over the other, especially when they are forced to compete over resources and gaining a stronger political voice.

[6] For example, I conducted an interview with a Latino woman who had canceled more than three times, and came late to the interview by forty minutes at her own office. When asked how she identifies racially or ethnically, she resisted and questioned the validity of such questions. She was quite guarded in her answers, and I intimated that she did not trust me, and I suspected this was partially due to my Korean ethnicity, based on some of her answers about working for her affiliated community organization.

the visual), images (visual objects), and seeing (the processes involved in consuming visual objects). These discussions build to discussing Mirzoeff's (2011) notions of visuality and countervisuality, which specifically contend with how power operates through, and sometimes as, visual social processes.

Chapter 3, titled, "Transnational Moments and Movements," discusses at length the historical events that led to the current formation of Koreatown through the power dynamic expressed in the relationship between visuality and countervisuality. I discuss a brief transnational history of Korean migration to Hawai'i and the United States and highlight the transnational political activity that shaped the Korean and Korean American communities, as well as how the transnational history is still connected to how Koreatown is utilized as a space to exercise transnational political activism, through several cases. Then, I discuss how the spatial identity of Koreatown shifted over time, and how Sa-I-Gu was a turning point for Koreatown, beginning a desire for political power and representation.

Chapter 4, "Visuality in the City," focuses on the relationship between the networks of power of Koreatown through discussing constructions of space and boundaries. I utilize examples of two development projects (The Vermont and Catalina on 8th Project), 2009-10 neighborhood boundary formalization, and 2011-2 city redistricting. Together, they speak to the lopsided power dynamics encapsulated in the City's elected officials in the construction of Koreatown and the consequences for the transnational immigrant communities in the space, especially as the powerful entities begin to utilize Koreatown as their own political capital.

In Chapter 5, "Countervisuality: Producing a Claimable and Consumable Space," I posit that, while many of the transnational and immigrant communities are often disenfranchised in the proceedings of the City politics, these communities are able to harness a different mode of power

that they could utilized to assert their countervisuality. The chapter focuses on examining signs, urban markers, transnational of material goods and events, as well as the WCKNC's 6th Street Project to discuss how a transnational community exerts its countervisuality by producing a claimable and consumable transnational space. Lastly, Chapter 6 concludes with a summarization of key findings and this study's possible contributions to the field.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL LENSES

For this project, I incorporate notions of transnationality, urbanism, and Mirzoeff's (2012) visuality and countervisuality to construct a lens through which to examine the relationships between the constructions of space and production of power in transnational urban spaces. The studies that inform this project are embedded in globalization and transnational studies, urban studies, and visual studies, each presenting power in its own way. Specifically, the frames will be discussed as treatment of cities under globalization, understanding the visual, as well as visuality and countervisuality. Together, they provide a stronger lens to examine a transnational visual urban space.

GLOBALIZATION AND TREATMENT OF CITIES

Globalization as a concept is contested in a multitude of ways, from its history, who or what it affects, to what it means now. There are several approaches to examining globalization, which can be categorized as networks and flows, borders and borderzones, and transnational frameworks. The discussions surrounding globalization are vast, complicated, and messy, but each examines the dynamics of power and how this power is manifested differently, depending on the approach. Though each informs the study in some capacity, the transnational framework allows the ability to examine relationships between power and the everyday and the local, rather than focusing only on abstract discussions of "global" power. Focusing on the everyday and the local helps us gauge flows of not only capital, but also ideas, materials, and migration. Still, it is important to understand the other perspectives because, ultimately, they inform each other.

Networks and Flows

The networks and flows approach highlights a set of common characteristics, such as the embeddedness of technological innovation having a role in globalization (Appadurai 1996; Castells 1996; Sassen 2000; Urry 2000). However, the shapes of these networks and flows are not necessarily imagined the same way. For example, Arjun Appadurai (1996:33) conceptualizes a more nebulous and irregular shape of the network, identifying five scapes of the global cultural flow which are fluid and imaginary whereas the models of Manuel Castells (1996) and Saskia Sassen (2000) focus on the networks composed of specific and specialized nodes and flows. John Urry (2000), on the other hand, envisions scapes as more tangible nodes through which flows are transmitted.

As Appadurai (1990:17) states, "global cultural process today are products of the infinitely varied mutual contest of sameness and difference on a stage characterized by radical disjunctures between different sorts of global flows and the uncertain landscapes created in and through these disjunctures." Appadurai (1996:33) categorizes five scapes: ethnoscapes (moving groups or persons), mediascapes (dispersion of information), technoscapes (movements of technology), finanscapes (flow of global capital), and the ideoscapes (flow of ideologies). Rather than focusing only on the flow of capital, these scapes represent "streams of flows along which cultural material may be seen to be moving across national boundaries" (Appaduari 1996:45-6). They are fluid and imaginary, coloring exchanges and interactions that occur between and within various nation-states. The scapes form "imaginary worlds" (1996:33), a notion that extends from Benedict Anderson's (1991 [1983]) "imaginary communities," meaning they form historically situated spaces, places, and communities, and the flows are embedded or negotiated within spaces.

On the other hand, for Castells (1996), who sees the shift toward a global, information- and technology-driven society as an indicator of a transformation toward a new social structure, there is a need to control the flows through this structural reconceptualization: "[O]ur societies are fundamentally made of flows exchanged through networks of organizations and institutions," and these flows can become autonomous (Castells 1996:29-30). This new shape is based on flows and networks of nodes, which Castells (1996:29) states are "purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors in organizations and institutions of society." Thus, the new shape consists of constant exchanges and interactions between specific social actors of organizations and institutions of society that can be separated from the local. He posits that power, composed of information, moves as flows within these networks. The increasing value of the ability to wield this power (e.g., to control the information) is an important feature of the type of network that Castells envisions. This is reflected through the existence of a global economy, which includes the globalization of national economies (where policies are shaped to reflect beyond domestic interests) and the informationalization of those economies. These networks have the ability to become autonomous, away from the actors that control these "nodes," signaling a major feature of the new form, "power of flows" rather than flows of power (Castells 1996:30). Although there is an enveloping of the planet in this imagery of a system of networks, there can still be spaces of exclusion between networks with power differentials (e.g., between those with and without access to information technology). With these differences in power as well as spaces of exclusion, it is unclear as to how exactly these networks and flows operate for those in their periphery.

Sassen's (2000) approach equally avoids engagement with how networks and flows are affected by power and scale differentials, because she also focuses on organizations and institutions as the nodes within networks, meaning, as with Castells, the periphery as part of the existing networks is not necessarily examined. She does problematize the "assumptions of the nation-state as a container, representing a unified spatiotemporality" within the social sciences (Sassen 2000:215). She further complicates the dualistic relationship which globalization theory essentializes as between the global and the national. Sassen (2000:216) argues that these two "spheres," in the network she describes, do not exist as mutually exclusive entities, but as overlapping parts. This leads to a decentering of the existing hierarchy as all parts of the local and the global negotiate and are negotiated. Global cities (Sassen 1984, 2000, 2001) become the space in which the global and the national negotiate and are negotiated, leading to a decentering of the existing hierarchy as all parts of the local and global are negotiated and negotiating within the same temporal space.

Additionally, Sassen (2000:229) contends that the "transnational processes that compose economic globalization, in tandem with the partial localization of the global in national territories" destabilize the dichotomous relationship between the global and the national. This stabilization occurs on a temporal scale as well, where there are some temporalities that are slow, and these differences in speed affect processes and development. Sassen (2000:2230) further observes that parts of the network exist on multiple spatio-temporalities, leading to what she refers to as "a particular territorialization of capital." For example, the "national economy" to which she refers is neither completely national nor global, but its current state exists as a result of the partial denationalization of the nation-state as well as a nationalization of the global. This is also akin to what Castells (1996:30-1) describes through the process of deconstruction and

reconstruction of the local locality because of its existence in the flows of the network. Both Sassen and Castells perceive that these reconstitutions of "master" concepts (Sassen 2000), such as the nation-state, have come to be in flux, and, in order to participate in a global economy, nations adopt policies to reflect the realization that many domestic interests are global and vice versa.

Urry (2000), like Castells (1996) and Sassen (2000), sees the deeply rooted relationship between technology and global networks. He further complicates the conceptualization of global networks by adding global fluids to the picture. Urry (2000) posits that the concept of society has been altered as a result of these flows he identifies as mobilities. Hence, he pushes for challenging sociological conceptions of social relations and structures to include spatial considerations by discussing the value of the use of the concepts and meanings of flow, as horizontal and mobile, freeing the field from vertical and immobile conceptualizations. Urry's (2000) approach allows room to examine discrepancies and differences in the various elements of networks because his approach to flows, unlike scapes that focus on "machines, technologies, organisations, texts and actors that constitute various interconnected nodes along which the flows can be relayed"(35), is centered on the "peoples, images, information, money and waste, that move within and especially across national borders and which individual societies are often unable or unwilling to control directly or indirectly" (36). Urry's shift to crossing borders encompasses another perspective on globalization that prioritizes the processes of borders.

Borders and Borderzones

Framing globalization by focusing on borders and borderzones moves away from abstracted flows and closed networks to a more tangible process of crossing of borders. It

complicates the notion of crossing borders, with some scholars conceptually distinguishing "'borderlands', 'border crossings', and 'the border'" (Lugo 2000:356), emphasizing that they are not synonymous or interchangeable. The differences are rooted in experience of navigating the border versus examining the border as comprising "imposed and sanctioned" governmental policies (Lugo 2000:356). The border and borderzones perspective points to a power dynamic that has an "unevenness" created through new, old, and reformed borders (Lugo 2000; Nederveen Pieterse 2002). Neoliberal globalization is seen to have led to inequality in the experiences amongst border crossers, and has benefitted the privileged. For example, Nederveen Pieterse (2002:4) points to the notion of flexible citizenship, as coined by Aiwha Ong (1999), and Nederveen Pieterse (2002:2) has stated that there are "uneven combinations of borderlessness and borders in finance, capital labour, politics, security, and culture." These concerns are also reflected in the need to focus on "unprivileged subjects" (Lugo 2000:368).

Borders are formed, dissolved, reformed, utilized, maintained, and perpetuated in numerous ways (Kearny 1998; Lugo 2000; Nederveen Pieterse 2002). For example, through the example of the border between Mexico and the United States, Kearny (1998) points out that borders are utilized as a control mechanism that regulates labor and laborers, rather than flow of immigration. In this perspective, migrants are also seen as actors that can and do contest identities that are projected onto them by border agents, and, instead, they have the ability to create their own. Borderzones (Kearney 1995), or border areas, are "broad, indistinct and fluctuating [zones] that overlaps both nation-states" (Kearney 1998:118) that the border straddles. It is this border area, no longer rooted in geographic territory, which has become the site of contestation (Kearny 1998:124). This shift signals the borders and borderzones perspective to transnational approaches, from the modern "absolute boundaries" (Kearney

1998:119), which is tied to nationalism, to a transnational phase (1998:121), where there is a "blurring and reordering" of characteristics, relationships (such as the one between core and periphery), and boundaries. These changes are reflected in the borders and border areas, with the latter especially becoming uneven and unclear (Kearney 1998:124). The shifts in the transnational age point to physical and abstract spaces as sites of contestation, as the nation-state is no longer the unit of measurement or the centrifugal force.

Problematizing the concentration on the border crossings, the discourse on borders is further expanded by the conceptualization of borderzones (Lugo 2000; Nederveen Pieterse 2002), because this notion "implies multiple sides, [whereas] 'border' implies two sides" (Lugo 2000:359). Hence, incorporating borderzones as an analytic tool moves away from a binary and limited assumptions of the complexities of the processes of borders and border crossings given that existing limitations are not always considered; for example, border crossings are less common than border inspections. This, according to Lugo (2000:355), is because the inspections can ultimately hinder the ability of the "unprivileged subjects" from crossing borders. These inspections are "pervasive" (Lugo 2000:355), and can also occur on multiple levels "not only across such social hierarchies as gender, age, and class relations, but especially within them" (Lugo 2000:367). Focusing on the inspections at the border helps expand the borders and borderzones approach to include everyday life. Expanding the discourse beyond just the borders can be beneficial by including border inspections as sites of contestations (Kearny 1998; Lugo 2000). Still, this does not necessarily mean that border crossing is not important, but it must be incorporated to the literature to develop a fuller understanding of globalization, its processes, and consequences through this lens.

There is also value in treating borders as more than divisions between nations, and more as parts of negotiation processes (Nederveen Pieterse 2002). As old borders dissolve through globalization, new internal borders are created, which are less concrete. Some scholars, like Nederveen Pieterese (2002:10), push for developing a new border theory in order to understand the complexities of globalization. Nederveen Pieterse conceptualizes hierarchical integration as the shape of neoliberal globalization: "hierarchical integration is two-fold — "integration" refers to the advancing of borderlessness, and "hierarchy" refers to the levying of newly formed internal borders, boundaries, and stratifications (Nederveen Pieterse 2002:1). Approaching globalization through borders highlights three dynamics that influence its processes: "enlargement of influence of transnational capitalism, asymmetric inclusion and risk containment" (Nederveen Pieterse 2002:11). Borders act to keep people and materials in, as well as people and materials out: "[Crossing borders] become more difficult as we move from capital to labour and from intangible (finance) to tangible assets" (Nederveen Pieterse 2002:9). In other words, while border crossings for people and materials are increasingly difficult, the intangible have an easier time going across borders. While this observation of the ways borders and borderzones operate and are operationalized certainly provides a largely missing component in network and flows approaches to globalization, it misses how the crossing of borders by people, materials, and the intangible is not always one way or a singular exchange.

Transnational

Transnational approaches to globalization begin with the acknowledgement of the agency of people, specifically transmigrants, looking not only at the impact of intangible flows on the communities, but also at the role of communities in global processes. Hence, the way people,

materials, and the intangible (such as finance) can be viewed as multidirectional and continuous, rather than unidirectional or as a singular crossing. Discourses on transnationalism are embedded largely in migration. Within globalization literature, transnationality becomes often blurred and imbued with a multitude of meanings. Transnationalism pushes to shed light on "emerging cultural processes — identity, political, and economic transformations in particular. Through a transnational optic, human agency 'from below' comes into focus as well as macros structural forces 'from above'" (Mahler 2003:94). The transnational framework brings forth discussions of creating and sustaining personhood: how are migrants seen to navigate the worlds in which they reside and how do they negotiate their hybrid or diasporic identities? Are they actors or pieces of a larger puzzle? Transmigrants and transmigration especially signify the embodiment of the focus on communities often external to the discourse of global networks and flows that treats nation-states as the centrifugal force.

Kearney (1998:118, 121) suggests that there has been a shift from modernity to transnationalism. He views the transnational shift, a reflection of late capitalism, to exist past modernity, in which the unit of measurement is the nation-state. Citing Benedict Anderson (1991 [1983]), Kearney (1998:119) states that the nation-state could only be formed with "absolute boundaries," along with nationalism, which in itself cannot exist without borders and boundaries to expand and protect. Along these lines, the modern nation-state is seen to have utilized its centralized "disciplinary power" to promote and sustain national unity while facilitating "the reproduction of social and cultural differentiation within the nation" (Kearney 1998:121). However, within the transnational perspective, individuals and their networks are seen as units of analysis, though "their communities and broader institutionalized structures," including governmental structures (Portes, et al. 1999:220) can also be included. Transnationalism also has

the ability to "accommodate a number of diverse activities (Portes, et al. 1999:221) and can be viewed through transmigration and transmigrants.

Transmigration (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1992, 1995; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landholt 1999) is part of a reaction to the globalization of capital, challenging the notion that migration is "natural" and inevitable pairing with globalizations and has been able to develop because of technologies. Transmigrants are identified as "immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state" (Glick Schiller, et al. 1995:48). This approach looks at how immigrants do not assimilate by simply cutting ties to their home country. Immigrants are seen as maintaining links to their homeland and hometowns (Portes, et al. 1999:217). This leads to formations of transnational communities (Glick Schiller, et al. 1995). Problems can emerge within the "new" home, for example, racism, lack of economic and social security, and the continuous connection to their home that can push against the newly forged connections in their new home. Transmigration is a discourse that also looks at deterritorialized nation-states, which are not bound by geographical boundaries, but are connecting transnational migrants to their old country (Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Glick Schiller, et al. 1995). This is an especially invaluable notion, as the assumption of "uprooting" or unidirectional or singular movement not only fails to comprehend the availability of accessible technologies for many immigrants to sustain their connection to the homeland, but it also fails to acknowledge cultural roots as well as the existence of cultural enclaves that can be found or formed in a variety of ways in such communities. The transnational perspective allows room to consider how immigrants build and maintain multiple networks across different nations. It is thus

an imperative part of transnationalism to acknowledge the value of approaching globalization "from below" and to emphasize contextuality (Guarnizo and Smith 1998).

Still, Guarnizo and Smith (1998:5) and Smith (2005) warn against only concentrating on the possible "liberatory character" of transnationalism. They are strongly skeptical of the one-sided visualization of transnationalism based on this emancipatory characteristic as presented by other scholars, including Portes and Kearney. Guarnizo and Smith (1998:25) ultimately call for looking at transnationalism from above and below, without giving into the privileging of one over the other, grand or personal narratives, while lamenting (27) the lack of distinction between transnational processes, entities, and spaces. Keeping this warning in mind, it is imperative to delve further into understanding the ways cities are perceived in the context of globalization.

Treatment of cities in relation to globalization

The study of the "urban" is housed in many fields and has spawned specialized studies such as urban sociology and urban geography. Depending on the field, there is also a line drawn between notions of urbanization and urbanism, where urbanization refers to "morphology" and urbanism refers to "ways of life" (Fraser 2006:192). In this study, however, the two are posited as interconnected rather than being explicit from the other's discourse. Approaches to cities can also stem from focusing on the effects of social phenomena on cities, to the effects of cities on social phenomena. Cities can be treated as sites, processes, tools, and/or in flux. As Marcuse and van Kempen (2000:1) observe, "cities are in a constant process of internal change"; hence, they can show tribulations as well as innovations of specific moments in histories. In addition, Marcuse and van Kempen (2000:2) continue, "Spatial divisions of themselves are nothing new, but they are not stable in their causes, in their appearance, in their scale, or in their effects."

When overlapping with the approaches to globalization, urbanization and urbanism can be viewed through varying lenses.

Discourses on cities and globalization are often predicated upon binaries, sometimes proposed in a hierarchy, between urban and rural, modern and traditional, and global and local. There is a heavy-handed preference for this specific approach to cities in the context of globalization, and the cities under this relationship can be "called global cities by some, world cities or megacities by others" (Marcuse and van Kempen 2000:1), reflecting the networks and flows approach toward globalization. In relation to globalization, two prominent conceptualizations of cities are "world cities" and "global cities," which are at times treated interchangeably though they do have distinct characteristics. World cities (of the world cities hypothesis), coined and developed largely by John Friedmann and Goetz Wolff (1982), Friedmann (1986; 1995), and Peter J. Taylor (2004), provide a metanarrative designed to "synthesize […] into labour markets, information technology, international migration, cultural studies, city building processes, industrial location, social class formation, massive disempowerment, and urban politics" (Friedmann 1995:43). Framing the issue through Immanuel Wallerstein's (1984) world systems theory, Friedmann (1995 [1986]:317) posited that world cities are reflective of the spatial organization of "new international labour," meaning that world cities are representative of the division of labor under globalization (Hill and Kim 2000: 2168). This approach views the world city network as "a part of globalization processes that are inevitable and irreversible" (Cabigon 2006:73). In other words, world cities are produced as a result of globalization (Hill and Kim 2000:2168). These cities are treated as centers (Knox 1995; Hill and Kim 2000), or "basing points" (Friedmann 1995 [1986]:319), of global flow or capital accumulation, "commanding nodes of the global system," that are in a system of hierarchy

(Friedmann 1995:22-3). This, however, does not mean that these cities are actors (Friedmann 1995:22; Knox 1995:7); instead, they are sites and places through which global capital flow is articulated. The categorization of the hierarchy of the cities embodies the World Bank's ranking of countries into core, semi-periphery, and periphery, and then separating cities into primary and secondary cities in these countries (Friedmann 1995 [1986]:320). The world cities approach is thought to highlight the "major contradictions of industrial capitalism," including "spatial polariziation," and subsequently, polarization of classes, on three scales: global, regional, and metropolitan (Friedmann 1995 [1986]:324). These world cities are controlled by transnational elites, which play a role in not only supporting and sustaining positionality (partially through power of consumption), but also in propelling the divide between them and the lower classes (Knox 1995:6).

"Global cities," a term closely tied to the works of Sassen (1991; 2000; 2001; 2005; 2011) and Castells (1989; 1996; 2001), among others, primarily focuses on (specific) cities as nodes in a global (economic) network. As Sassen (2005:28) stated, the notion of the world cities has existed for centuries, including during the European colonial expansions. There is a relationship between world cities and global cities in that "most of today's major global cities are also world cities" (Sassen 2005:28), though this does not necessarily mean that cities that were not once considered to be world cities cannot be global cities today. Global cities scholars argue for "the existence of new types of global cities that concentrate worldwide corporate and financial control functions" (Beauregard and Haila 2000:22). These global cities, which according to Sassen (2001), are London, New York, Tokyo (though its status is a bit murky), and a few elite others, are treated as nodes that are central to the global economic and cultural flows. Under this approach, they are highly influential and are, in essence, the movers and shakers of

global dynamics. For Sassen (2011), a global city can exist as a pair with a global slum, where "the bigger and more powerful the global city, the bigger and more mobilized its slums." In other words, like the transnational elites under the world cities approach, there is a perpetuation of a division of classes, and, in the relationship between a global city and global slum, such a perpetuation pertains to the shifting of unwanted actors (e.g., the poor) and industries (e.g., manufacturing) from a global city to a global slum, in order to create more "desirable" and consumable spaces (e.g., luxury residences). These constructions are aided by the relationship, as Castells (2001; 2002) identifies, between flows of information, technological advances, and the cities, which connect these cities (Sassen 2001) in an elite network, leading to the centralization of power and subsequently privileging these global cities over others (Sassen 2001). Though cities are an integral part of the analysis, the growth of these cities seems to depend heavily on the exchange flow of information occurring as "dematerialized and digitalized" forms at an accelerated speed, not necessarily rooted in a physical space (Sassen 2001:411). Through such perspectives, cities can become nearly incorporeal, one of the several criticisms that are contended with by others who want to save the global cities perspective as well as those who want to instead move toward a transnational approach, which concretizes cities.

For example, although Brugmann (2009) laments the abstractedness of the discourse of flows, he sees a planetary city, a vision of "The City" that encompasses the entirety of the planet by incorporating a bottom-up perspective, incorporating what may be perceived as marginal or peripheral in the world or global cities approach. He also pushes for incorporating the City system's "revolutionary social and political approaches" (Brugmann 2009:12). Cities can be seen as "transforming ecology, economics, politics, and social relations everywhere" (Brugmann 2009:1), and the enclaves, districts towns, of relatively recent born cities "play a major role in

world affairs today" (Brugmann 2009:8). This is a move away from the networked global cities approach, as it moves away from only seeing "global cities" as sites of flow. Brugmann (2009:8) also emphasizes that the capital and cultural flows occur on a tangible plane whereas some (e.g., Marcuse and van Kempen 2000:263) suggest that globalized cities (though lacking a singular vision) reflect that "(almost) all cities are touched by the process of globalization and that involvement in that process is not a matter of being either at the top or the bottom of it, but rather of the nature and extent of influence of the process." The concept of "globalizing cities," unlike "global cities," "encompass 'other' cities in 'other' places which illustrates the impasses and paradoxes of globalization" (Yeoh 1999:608), meaning that globalization happens and affects not only an imagined centralized node of so-called global cities in the northern and western hemispheres, but also the other hemispheres that are often placed external to a centralizing notion that permeates when focusing on global cities. Such scholars (e.g., Brugmann 2009; Hill and Kim 2000; Yeoh 1999), while critical, see the world or global cities approach to be worth rescuing. The world or global cities approaches have some limitations (Ley 2004), as they provide an incomplete picture by focusing on the development of the global economy; thus, they have yet to "understand the ecological dimension of global change that has been caused by urbanization" (Brugmann 2009:12). Hill and Kim (2000:2186) argue that there are cities, such as Tokyo and Seoul, which act as a "national basing-point" for transnational corporations, though not necessarily as a node for "global operations of borderless firms." Holding these cities as an example, Hill and Kim (2000:2188) also criticize the West-centric analytical frame of world or global cities approaches, a criticism also reflected in the works of Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift (2002) that, through a postmodern approach, insists on a loss of centrality in cities.

The postmodern city approach (Davis 1990; Soja 1990, 1997) looks at how the postmodern city is competing against "urban regions around the world for an increasingly mobile capital" due to the decreasing power of the nation-state and the persistence of "global forces" (Beauregard and Haila 2000:23), as the modernist city's spatial hierarchy has decentered. According to Davis (1990), Soja (1990, 1997), and other similarly inclined scholars[7], Los Angeles is the exemplar of a postmodern city: "Los Angeles is a true world city and its products — both industrial and cultural — are influential around the globe" (LeGates and Stout 2011 [1996]:19). This approach, however, is not unlike the global city approach, wherein Los Angeles is treated as a global center. In other words, as the world and global cities approach privileges certain cities as nodes in the network, the postmodern city approach favors Los Angeles as the site of centralized power. Similarly, in both global cities and postmodern cities approaches discuss an intangibility of the existence of the cities of the foci. As Smith (1998:485) contends, the "global city" does not have a tangible existence; instead, it is "an endless interplay of differently articulated transnational networks and practices." Smith (1998; 2001), to move away from the global cities perspective, suggests "transnational urbanism," which calls for an approach that considers multiple dimensions, "from below" and from above. He also argues that the concepts of world cities or global cities are social constructed, "not as a place or an object consisting of essential properties that can be readily measured outside the process of making meaning" (Smith 1998:485). These critiques then lead to an analysis of the global cities frameworks' focus and valuing of scale.

Scale is important in discussion of cities, especially within the global or world cities approaches (Robinson 2006). While it does have value, scale runs the risk of developing a

[7] Mike Davis and Edward Soja are part of the "LA School" of urbanism, which contrasts itself from the "Chicago School" of urbanism, which has a modernist approach.

hierarchy in the context of globalization. James Fraser (2006:191) points out that, by embedding the discussion of cities in a global economy and division of labor, it "situates the primacy of market relations as the tie that binds relationally constructed places," creating a core and periphery between the global and the local. Robinson (2006) suggests the concept of "ordinary cities" on the premise that the analytical frame should be inclusive of all cities. Through a post-colonialist lens, she problematizes the embodiment of a developmentalist (modernization) ranking and categorization of cities (e.g., core and periphery). Approaching cities and globalization through these hierarchical lenses hinders the acknowledgement of diversity and differences by pushing a specific notion of what all cities should aspire to be (Robinson 2006). There are also approaches that additionally embody "the intersecting reality of circumscribed everyday lives" (Ley 2004:151), which turn away from a global economy-only focus to an understanding of the connections between the complex and diverse local urban economies and globalization as well.

With a focus on the local, rather than just the global, an important relationship also arises between globalization, cities, and citizenship (Caldeira 1996; Davis 1990, 2006; Fawaz 2009; Holston and Appadurai 1999). As Holston and Appadurai (1999:187) note, "What it means to be a member of society in many areas of the world came to be understood, to a significant degree, in terms of what it means to be a right-bearing citizen of a territorial nation-state." However, under globalization and its processes, cities (and the life they entail) have come to influence the conceptualization of a citizen or citizenship (Holston and Appadurai 1999). Beyond the right to "participate in politics" (Holdston and Appadurai 1999:2000), there are a plethora of rights that are both formal and informal, from occupying spaces to being able to abandon citizenship. The right or the denial of occupying specific spaces can happen due to local or national policies, via

formal and informal ways (Davis 2006). This approach opens up the possibility of discussing a variety of power dynamics at the local (and everyday life) level that have relationships with global and transnational processes (Holston and Appadurai 1999).

In the face of changing populations and immigrant generations, a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between communities, cities, and globalization is imperative, specifically, how immigrant and transnational communities contend with the city in which they reside, regardless of their national citizenship, and how these global and local communities have shaped cities. Still, only looking at the globalization or transnational approaches to understanding the experiences of immigrant and transnational communities in cities does not necessarily interrogate the relationship between the communities and the spaces that the communities occupy. To better examine these relationships, I utilize concepts from visual studies literature that contend with power to construct a thicker, hence more powerful, lens.

Visual

"It is not just that we see the way we do because we are social animals, but also that our social arrangements take the forms they do because we are seeing animals" (Mitchell 2002:171). The visualization of our thoughts and experiences is not readily included in our understanding of the social realities. We know we "see;" we imagine that our ideas are often not separated between vision and text, but a jumbled combination of images and words. Yet we live and work depending greatly on our ability to describe by and of text, especially within the social sciences (Mitchell 1994; Becker 2006), invariably ignoring a component of everyday processes. This project, hence, highlights the importance of understanding not only the "social construction of the visual field" but also the "visual construction of the social field" (Mitchell 2002:171). Hence,

while it is important to understand the effect of the social on the visual, it is equally imperative to understand the effect of the visual on the social. This also means that it will be important to discuss the visual beyond visual culture and image studies, while still acknowledging the value of image studies, by incorporating notions that explicitly discuss the visual in context of processes of power, such as Nicholas Mirzoeff's (2011) visuality and countervisuality.

Visual Culture

"Visual culture" can embody an ocean of genres of visual materials and processes or specific understandings of a specific form of culture. Matthew Rampley (2005) argued that the field of visual culture is dominantly equated with the study of the image. Mirzoeff (1998:5) contended that if visual culture was only a history of images framed under semiotic representation, it "creates a body of material so vast that no one person or even department could ever cover the field." From traditional visual art forms (e.g., painting, sculptures, photographs) to (old/new) media to differing frames of analysis, all are and have various identifications of visual culture, and are continuously changing. Other narrower and skeptical lenses (Elkins 2003a, 2003b) firmly root the notion within art and art history while questioning the interdisciplinary nature of visual culture as a subject. As Elkins (2003a) stated,

> Visual culture might seem at first to be the study of popular art, but it also includes recent avant-garde art which is not at all popular in the way mass media are. Visual culture can include documents (the visual appearance of passports, bureaucratic forms and tickets) but in general it sticks to art and design- it does not encompass engineering drawing, scientific illustration or mathematical graphics (94).

This streamlined categorization of visual culture does not take into consideration the production of the visual, power, the visual realm external to the world of art and art history, or the variety of visual negotiations that occur on a daily basis. It is seen as failing to deal with the multiple facets

of the visual object (Bal 2003:5). Mirzoeff (1998:6) proposed that notions of visual culture do not rely solely on the act of seeing alone, but that visual culture is the "visualization of things that are not in themselves visual," which signaled his later (2012) development of the concepts of visuality and countervisuality.

Influences of modernity and subsequent technological developments have led to an increase in the variation of "visual culture," with claims that much of Western culture has become image-centric facilitated by developed technologies (Rampley 2005:15). Walter Benjamin (1986 [1936]) and John Berger (1972) also noted that mechanical (re)production has changed in how visual culture (e.g., art) is perceived by the viewer. Part of the shift comes from understanding that mechanization of the reproduction *en masse* changes how value is perceived.

Challenging the conventional notions of visual culture expands to encompass the visual experience. It "opens up an entire world of intertextuality in which images, sounds and spatial delineations are read on to and through one another, lending ever-accruing layers of meanings and of subjective responses to each encounter we might have" from films to environments (Rogoff 1998:14). This creates room for grasping unique events as well as everyday visual processes, which becomes a way to include notions of power in defining visual culture.

Conventional definitions of visual culture have "[signified] painting, sculpture, design and architecture; it indicates a late modern broadening of that previously contained within the definition of 'fine art'" (Jenks 1995:16). Yet, traditional art's relation to museums alone provides a plethora of questions — from layouts, the choice to exhibit, and the procurement processes to the patrons, the production and consumption of museum and its contents. Socio-politically, museums are great examples of the complexities that comprise the visual due to their general public existence (Sandell 2007). If "visual culture works towards a social theory of visuality,

focusing on questions of what is made visible, who sees what, how seeing, knowing and power are interrelated" (Hooper-Greenhill 2000:14), then visual culture could be defined as beyond examinations of the conventional forms of art, leading to a multitude of possibilities that would include the visual-social spaces, such as the museum.

By expanding the field of visual culture, a more nuanced understanding emerges, or, as W.J.T. Mitchell (2002:170) stated, "Visual culture is the visual construction of the social, not just the social construction of vision." Rather than focusing on only the visual object that is consumed, Mitchell's call for re-assessment, like that of Mirzoeff (1995; 1998) and Hooper-Greenhill (2000), requires a form of visual culture that also includes investigating the processes of production and dissemination of the visual materials. Just as Benjamin's work (2002 [1927]) on the Parisian shopping arcades denotes the relationship between the visual spectacle of a "dream landscape" and process of consumption, Mirzoeff (2005), Debord (2010 [2000]), and Baudrillard (1994) highlight the relationship between the visual spectacle, consumption, and how visually mediated social relations have become. The effect of technology that facilitates consumptive practices is part of visual culture — "[it] is concerned with visual events in which information, meaning or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology" (Mirzoeff 1998:3). For example, YouTube videos have a vast span of topics, and textual commentaries or video replies enact conversations through visual modes of communication. Perhaps most importantly, such communication mediates the everyday through the visual, moving the focus away from an elitist conceptualization of visual culture ("Art").

Imagining visual culture as having "a history that needs exploring and defining in the modern and as well as postmodern period" (Mirzoeff 1998:5), Mirzoeff claimed that postmodernism is visual culture. Through similar lenses, theorists such as Dick Hebdige and

Stuart Hall have discussed the representational value of visual culture, or a lack thereof. For Hebdige (1988:163), postmodernism does not "seek to recover or retrieve the truth captured in the image but rather to liberate the signifier from the constraints imposed upon it by the rationalist theology of 'representation.'" Indeed, postmodernity does have roles in visual culture in how society is imagined. Baudrillard's work on hyperreality (1994) shows the relationship between postmodernity and the visual. Hyperreality is composed of simulations of reality that subsequently manifest as the "true" visible and invisible parts of the world; thus, the visual turn is necessitated by the postmodern everyday life. Visual culture is "a tactic with which to study the genealogy, definitions, and functions of postmodern everyday life" (Mirzoeff 1998:5). If so, how do these inform how visual objects, or images, are treated and valuated?

Images

Images are forms or objects produced in numerous ways through various media. Whether they are Renaissance paintings, photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe, films by Steven Spielberg, or cat videos on YouTube, images have reflected not only technological innovations, but also the changes within the social and cultural landscape in which these images were produced, disseminated, and consumed. Represented by multiple media — paintings, photographs, "pictures," prints, films, and others such as museums or advertisements — an image's treatment is based on its perceived and potential value as "art."

Images are not just in the eyes of the beholder. The person who creates the image heavily influences the various factors involved in the perceiver. For instance, during the Renaissance, many painters forced the eye to have a specific perspective of the painting by utilizing a triangulated field of vision that receded to the horizon within the canvas. And depending on

where it is located, when it is viewed, and who sees it, the purpose, value, and meaning can change, sometimes in spite of the intentions of the person or persons producing it or ordering its creation (Berger 1972). As Banksy (2006: 170), a political graffiti artist very familiar with the role of perception in art, has observed,

> Art is not like other culture because its success is not made by its audience. […] We the people, affect the making and the quality of most of our culture, but not our art. The Art we look at is made by only a select few. A small group create, promote, purchase, exhibit and decide the success of Art. Only a few […] have any real say. When you go to an Art gallery you are simply a tourist looking at the trophy cabinet of a few millionaires.

This observation reflects how certain images are utilized, valued, and negotiated. As a commentary on what "Art" represents, his own work is what Becker referred to as "the arts intended to create problems for investigation" (2008 [1982]: ix). He also reflected Becker's notion that art is a collective product (2008 [1982]:13; 1990). It is the context in which the valuation and negotiations of the image occur that provide the analysis (Berger 1972; Becker 1995, 2002). And, if art and politics have an entwined existence, as claimed by Jacques Rancière's notion (2009), this connects with Berger and Becker's notions about the value of context in the visual, which in turn creates the value of the visual. This brings up the question of the role of technology in these conceptualizations.

(Re)presenting art became complicated via modernity's technological innovations morphing what was perceived to be records or interpretations of what could be seen (Berger 1972; Benjamin 1968 [1936]). This also revealed and emphasized the abstracted value (mystification) of art, as shifts in understanding value were based on the shift in work influenced by new technologies (Berger 1972: 21). With the development of cameras came changes to both production and consumption of images (Harper 2005). These changes included modes, medium, forms, as well as consumption. "Photographs, films and videotapes are 'visible data' [...]. [They]

record the visual perceptions of those who made them, and they can stimulate additional visual perceptions among people who view them. [They] can also be used to represent ideas" (Wagner 2006:57). As the technology became more accessible, the variability of the data and values increased as well.

The push for empirical ("objective") images, especially within research, therefore, can be seen as problematic. It is imperative to understand beyond what Sarah Pink (2004: 1) identified as the purpose of visual research, that the visual materials are utilized "to research and present the cultures, lives and experience of other people." Not only does that specific claim of empiricism and objectivity fail to address the multifaceted issues of power, it ignores the role of the researcher and how that ultimately influences typology, juxtaposition, and construction of an image.

These issues also speak to the variables in the relationship between photography and the social sciences. What happens if a person is trained in photography? If he or she has learned from a course, then he or she will know how to put a photograph together, not only technically, but also aesthetically. Becker (1974:7) argues that it is imperative for social scientists to familiarize themselves with photographic literature to develop a "more careful way of looking." It might incite an emotional reaction (*punctum*) rather than solely rational or sociological inquiry (*studium*), categories discussed by Barthes (2010 [1980]) — neither of which takes away from the value of studying the visual, but is inconsistent with notions of objective images or photographs (Harper 1998). The social construction of the image is more complex than the acknowledgement of the role of the researcher or photographer (Harper 2000, 2004). The context of the photograph, the era, the cultural, and demographic background of the researcher or photographer also affects the construction of the images (Bourdieu 1996 [1990]; Harper 2000,

2004). It would be important to acknowledge the social position and power of the researcher or photographer, as these, rather than "completing" empirical ("objective") sociology, define it and its value. As Berger (1972) posited:

> For photographs are not […] a mechanical record. Every time we look at a photograph, we are aware […] of the photographer selecting that sight from an infinity of other possible sights. […] The photographer's way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject. The painter's way of seeing is reconstituted by the marks he makes on the canvas or paper (10).

The idea that images, despite their own contexts, could be colored by the contexts that surround the viewer, and the site where the images are being viewed, is part of developing a visual (sociological) project, because studying such negotiations highlights the visual social processes rather than only focusing on the social construction of the visual.

The ownership of the images also influences what the viewer analyzes. Contextual effects are vital when studying and understanding the visual and its processes. As Rose (2007:239) argues, photos "are subordinated in some way to the researcher's interpretations; they offer [support] in the way of evidence to answer a research question [and] they are used because they are seen as excessive to the researcher's interpretive work."

This is a different sense of ownership than exertion of control of who sees which collections as it is practiced in the art world (Becker 2008 [1982], 1990), or which images are censored, and so on (Barthes (2010 [1982]), Harper (1997, 2000, 2003, 2004), Pink (2004, 2007). These are possible ways that images could be approached, which in turn, reflect aspects of differing methods such as photo elicitation, photo-documentation, photographs as "specified generalization," and photographs that capture "texture" (Harper 2004; Rose 2007); each holds different values. The important difference to note is that photo elicitation and photo-documentation (as support) treat images "as evidence to be interpreted" (Rose 2007: 244),

whereas specified generalization and texture-oriented methods allow images to have their own positionality within the research as supplements.

In addition, Sontag's discussion of how photographs are negotiated is reflected in what Mirzoeff (2005; 2011) calls "the banality of images." Sontag's (1977 [1973]:19) suggests that "What determines the possibility of being affected morally by photographs is the existence of a relevant political consciousness." As Mirzoeff laments the emotional separation between citizens and images from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (2005; 2011), decades prior, Sontag stated (1977 [1973]:19), "[T]he ante keeps getting raised — partly through the very proliferation of […] images of horror." However, the gruesome images of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan did not have the same effects as the ones from Vietnam that instigated vast social movements during 1970s. Mirzoeff (2005:12) believed that the media saturation during the Iraq war created very differing results — "extensive coverage of the war in Iraq sustained the level of public consent in the United States." As Sontag (1977 [1973]:19) had observed regarding photographs from the war in Vietnam, "after repeated exposure to images it also becomes less real" despite the photographed brutality. And with time, the "intentions of photographs" (21) and their value (as art, the mundane, or a weight that invoke emotion) morphs into something other than its original existence.

Beyond photography, other forms of images play a role in understanding the visual — not only as objects of consumption, but also as the method of depicting social processes and meanings (Afonso 2004). For example, Ana Isabel Afonso utilized Manuel Joao Ramos' illustrations, which she had requested, shifting from commissioning illustrations to eliciting memory on paper, to grasp the urbanization of a rural village in Portuga for her dissertation. By employing the visual in this manner, Afonso's incorporation of Ramos' illustrations pushes

boundaries within areas of academia and research, which operate with assumptions of only specific forms of images to be valuable, acceptable, and legitimate "data." The value of this image depends on who sees it. Should it be treated as more than a piece of "art?" Should it be afforded same level of value as "objective" images? Images like the ones used in Afonso's work show the value of these forms of images as flexible and in flux based on contexts of who, what, where, and when. The relationship between context, values, and images are not only linked to processes of production and dissemination, but also visual consumption (i.e., seeing).

Seeing

For Berger (1972:7), seeing "comes before words" and "establishes our place in the surrounding world," ideas echoed in works such as that by Mitchell (1992, 1994, 2002). By contrast, for Jacque Rancière (2009), words are more prescient than the visual, though he also acknowledges the inseparability of word and image. Berger (1972:7) argues that "the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled." Mitchell (1994:16) makes the claim of a "pictorial turn," a shift that occurs simultaneously as "a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality" (16).

The way one sees depends on the context of the individual, temporality, and spatiality. Context constantly surrounds "truth," which insinuates that images are flexible. The negotiation of images, meanings and usability also depends on context (Becker 1995, 2007; Andermann 2007), which challenges the idea that images can be an objective presentation of any form of reality. Mitchell (1994:16) points to issues in the process of seeing as well as reading in that

"*spectatorship* […] may be as deep a problem as various forms of *reading* […] and that visual experience or 'visual literacy' might not be fully explicable on the model of textuality."

In addition, Crary (2000:1) stated that perception "can only be understood through its reciprocal relation to the rise of attentive norms and practices," and Harper (1998:32) posits that postmodern critique "reminds us that the meaning of [images] changes in different viewing contexts." He points out that "[P]ostmodernism leads us away from study of the 'great artists of the documentary' to the study of history of the uses of photograph" (1998:37). Issues surrounding ideology can be challenged with a postmodern lens, problematizing the "manner in which unequal relationships are hidden or ignored in the practice of photography" (Harper 1998:37).

The postmodern critique confronts the assumptions of objectivity and truthfulness attributed to photography used anthropologically or documentarily (Harper 1998:32). For example, this could be applied toward being critically aware of the "truthfulness" that may be claimed by the utilization of photographs within sociology, necessitating the questioning of the practice of visualization[8] itself. Challenging the truthfulness, objectivity, and authority of images creates a need to discuss visuality[9] and, congruently, reflexivity. While postmodernists may argue that "ethnographic knowledge and text can only ever be a subjective construction" (Pink 2007:23), it could also be argued that all forms of research are the researcher's visualizations of the research problem.

For Harper, there are four modes of seeing and treatments of images: scientific, narrative, reflexive, and phenomenological (1988, 2000). Each provides insight into how the visual can be

[8] Here, "visualization" means the various components and processes that factor into the analysis of a visual sociological project.
[9] This is discussed in the section on visuality, the relationship between power and the visual.

utilized and seen or approached, aptly reflective of how the visual is approached in multiple arenas — from newspapers, paintings, advertisements, to scholarly work, also reflecting those of other scholars. The scientific mode relates most to the purpose of objective data and evidence collecting. In terms of film, this mode is akin to what Denzin (2004:240) distinguishes as a "realist reading" which is composed of four characteristics — treating the images as "realistic, truthful depiction of some phenomenon"; viewing it as "establishing truth claims"; meaning can be "given through a close reading"; and the readings "validate the truth claims about the reality" the images depicts. As photographs could be utilized to understand nuanced details of "interaction, presentation of self, and relations" between people and their material environments (Harper 1988:61), this position points to a belief that photographs are able to hold certain truths, which a researcher can decode. Changes over time within specific spaces can be measured "[b]ecause the photographic image isolates a moment in time, one can measure change by rephotographing the same or similar social phenomena" (Harper 1988:62). Archives and studies of those images could provide a temporal and spatial analysis of the specific site, topic, people, or object that is being examined.

The complication raised by a shift from image to the narrative mode pertains to images with a storyline that is not necessarily "objectively" delineated solely through the images themselves, but also the narrator. However, the narrative mode's strength is that it depicts social processes through interactions. It is distinctive from textual narratives with "supporting" photographs — i.e., photographs taken to be collected as evidence, interpreted by the researcher, sometimes in conjunction with subjects involved: "supplementing" photographs are given more space "to have their own, perhaps rather unpredictable, effects in the research process" (Rose 2007:246).

The reflexive mode reflects forms of photo elicitation, providing a platform where the analyses are composed of the voices of the subjects, rather than solely the voice of the researchers. It "posits a different relationship between the sociologist, the image, and the subject" (Harper 1988:64). This form embodies Max Weber's concept of *vershten*, tackling representation, discussing, and giving value to the subject and the subject's point of view (Harper 1988:66). This approach could provide a way to move partially away from issues such as Said's (1978) Orientalism in research, as the subjects have some power in being able to present themselves and their cultural objects and processes, rather than having them interpreted by an external "authoritative" figure claiming expertise. This form gives power to the subject to depict its representation of self or cultural objects. Photo elicitation asks the subject to tell the researcher what the processes are, what they mean, and how they came to be. Rather than the researcher imposing an analysis of the processes, the researcher must acknowledge the knowledge of the subject. By asking the subjects to take photographs themselves, the researcher gives the subject power over visually representation.

The phenomenological mode takes the experience of seeing and the power dynamics that are involved in the process, using Roland Barthes' notions of *studium* and *punctum*. Applying Alfred Stieglitz's that "photographs can express spiritual, or psychological, equivalents" (Harper 1988:66) to social inquiry, Barthes "asks the question of why and how some photographs move him emotionally, others communicate to him in a rational manner, and some do both and others do neither. He suggests two terms, the *studium* and the *punctum*, to distinguish these properties" (Harper 1988:66). *Studium* refers to photographs that elicit rational interest or one of sociological inquiry. *Punctum*, on the other hand, refers to photographs that "prick his consciousness in the manner of an object of art" (Harper 1988:66). Our sociological inquiry may not be related to the

presumably less "rational" reaction to images, reflective of the Cartesian influence in analyzing the optic — "[W]e must think of the images formed in our brain" (Descartes 1998 [1637]:64). Descartes also posited that the image is a transmission of a resemblance of the object that is being viewed: "[T]he tiny upside-down image created by the eye [has] nothing to do with the object seen and that it [is] the mind — or the soul, as Descartes put it — that interprets the retinal image" (Mirzoeff 1998:54). This perspective paved the road to the development of modern observational science, by "opening up a gap between the observer and the observed" (Mirzoeff 1998:54). The phenomenological mode is an opaque, open-to-interpretation approach because of its insistence on analyses through self-reflection, raising the possibility of "subversive readings" (Denzin 2004), which challenge interpretations under scientific modes that claim objectivity (realist readings).

Within such distinctions also lie necessities for discussions of positionality and power dynamics created by the researcher. Unlike the scientific and narrative modes, the phenomenological mode posits that "the authority of definition rests with the sociologist" (Harper 1988:64). Within visual sociology, two discussions could arise. This first centers on how visually heavy, text-supported works would be perceived by the audience (readers) and received by the field of sociology. The second refers to the examinations of the relationship and processes between the audience and the visual object, as exemplified through Mirzoeff's (1991) visuality and countervisuality.

Visuality and Countervisuality

W.J.T. Mitchell (1992:3) stated, "The very conditions that allow art to come into being — the sites of its display, circulation, and social functionality, its address to spectators, its

position in systems of exchange and power — are themselves subject to profound historical shifts." Power, in various discourses of visual culture, images, and seeing, is not explicitly centralize in their construction. It is therefore imperative to understand what Mirzoeff (2011) referred to as "visuality" and "countervisuality." From newspapers, fashion magazines, movies, 3D, and television — which visual objects can we trust? How do we trust our own eyes? The variability of relationships that can occur with any visual event indicates power dynamics within the processes involved. Who has the right to see? Who has the right to be seen? Who has the right to visualize while others are penalized for crossing visual boundaries? The performativity of the visual is embodied in this discussion through visuality and countervisuality (Mirzoeff 2011) — who controls our gaze? Who controls what we see? What are allowed to see? This approach could be applied on multiple levels, from individuals to groups to governments, and can be a tool to critically understand the roles that we all play as visual and visualizing beings. The negotiations that occur in Mirzoeff's work on the right to look (countervisuality) present several ideas: a postcolonial history of visuality, a continuing cycle of high and low visibility, and a need to actively claim our right to look.

As mentioned, previous sections hinted at power within specific spaces and arenas; the purpose of the specific example of the museum presented here is to aid in discussing the various levels of power exercised in visual processes. This harkens back to Howard Becker's (2008 [1982]) notion of the collectivity that influences the existence of art, and in this study, other manifestations of visual processes. Whether it is a museum, a plantation field, warzone, the city, or even the Internet, the who-what-where-when-why of seeing is mediated through not only the viewer's context, but also that of the society in which the visual phenomena occur. The new

definition of visual culture is and should be characterized by visualizing the invisible as well as the visible (Mirzoeff 1998).

The framework that Mirzoeff (2011) utilizes to discuss visuality and countervisuality is decoloniality, which is exemplified in his arguments for the development of counterhistory in order to usurp hegemonic histories and framing of the present and the future. Yet as he contends, temporality is not necessarily linear, meaning multiple parts of histories do not dissipate with time, but are sustained throughout. Here, visuality operates on multiple planes of existence — imaginary, physical, and the real. It is ensconced in various operations of power, which for him, is deeply rooted in the West, in its colonialism and imperialism. He contends that Western hegemony was never gone, but has been sustained in imperialist praxis that is exemplified in warfare up to today, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. What is at stake in the conflict between visuality and countervisuality? For Mirzoeff (2011:5), "extended sense of the real, the realistic, and realism(s)."

Visuality, for Mirzoeff (2011:xv), is a weapon for authority, "a medium for the transmission and dissemination of authority and a means for the mediation of those subject to that authority," and a practice that leads to material and tangible effects, creating and presenting the power of authority as natural and legitimate. Modalities of visuality are composed of a series of operations — it classifies by naming, categorizing, and defining. They separate the classified into groups as a means of social organization, segregate to prevent unification which would lead to development of political subjects, and naturalize/legitimize an *a priori* aesthetic of power (3). This relates to a Foucauldian notion of a "disciplinary education of the gaze" (Andermann 2007:7), a form of control exercised over individuals and nations, creating legitimacy for those governing power. For example, *Seeing Studies* (Haghighian and Sepahvand 2011), an artist's

book resulting from a collective research project based on an Iranian Ministry of Education art textbook for middle school students, exemplifies how individuals are taught (socialized) how to see and negotiate changing values of what is seen.

Mirzoeff (2011) complicates this further by discussing the right to look beyond what individuals are socialized to see. He establishes the concept of countervisuality through complexes of visuality — plantation complex, imperial complex, and military-industrial complex. "Complex" refers "both to the production of a set of social organizations and processes that form a given complex, […] and the state of an individual's psychic economy" (5), thus, creating a sense of a knowledge base that is accepted as truth and real. The complex is both visualized and inhabited. Complexes of visuality are "articulation[s] of the claim to authority in that decolonial theory has called 'coloniality'" (5). With each complex, countering forces operated against the dominant formation of power. Within the plantation complex, the dominant authority — the plantation owners — controlled the slaves' right to look; within the imperial complex, the dominant authority had a wider reach through visualizations through mapping; the military-industrial complex has even a wider reach, spanning across the globe.

Each of these complexes could be viewed in two forms, the standard and the intensified. These had cyclic relationships that were often instigated by or based on the one prior, in a constantly fluctuating practice. In this, Mirzoeff sees a challenge to the current modes of global-visuality, steeped in the military-industrial complex. It is unclear whether the new challenge would be the final challenge, but it is more than likely a continuing process, as the right to look and visuality are in constant and seemingly consistent struggle. It is unclear if there are multiple real "reals" that could put forth a challenge to the "reality" perpetuated by hegemony. Andermann (2007:7) would argue that the state attempts to "hegemonize society" through

controlling outlets such as museums, which subsequently lead to controlling the visual spaces and histories produced. This is what Mirzoeff (2011:7) refers to as "visuality" having the authority, the capability, and the right to "discern meaning in both the medium and the message."

It should be made clear that these complexes have not disappeared, but continue to exist in one form or another throughout time. For example, Mirzoeff's notion of the plantation complex brings about notions of controlling the visual of the Other still active today. This indicates the type of temporality that is not necessarily only longitudinal, but also vertical and overlapping; thus, the construction of history is multiple-layered, continuous, and reverberating. The manner in which authority is exorcised through visuality does not completely dissipate with the development of a new complex. Rather, it evolves and remains stagnant at the same time — able to be perceived at various points of visual analytics. All of this is often in response to a countervisuality that is exercised in various points in time by the oppressed. This approach could be applied on multiple levels, from individuals to groups to the governments, and critically understand the roles we all play as visual and visualizing beings. The negotiations that occur in Mirzoeff's (2011) work on the right to look (countervisuality) presented several ideas — a postcolonial history of visuality, a continuing cycle of high and low visibility, and a need to actively claim our right to look.

In order to understand the study of the visual beyond treatment of images or the visual as teaching tools or "evidence," it is imperative to contend with how power operates within the context of visual social processes. Within this study, the study of the visual is further complicated by the incorporations of spatiality as part of the discourse on the visual. This affects how the visual is treated — not just as visible material, but also as something that can be as fluid as it can seem rigid, invisible yet negotiated. Then, framing locales such as the Internet as well as

cities as visual spaces can work to construct an understanding of the processes and negotiations that contend with a synthesized understanding of transnational visual social processes.

CONCLUSION

This project aims to answer the question, "How does visuality and countervisuality affect transnational urban spaces?" In order to develop a lens that allows an understanding of the enmeshed relationships between construction (sometimes reconstructions) of transnational urban spaces and production of power, the study contends with questions regarding how the space is rendered visible and invisible; who, within such spaces, are able to render or are rendered visible and invisible in the processes of production and consumption of these spaces; and how these processes, dynamics, and various actors are affected by the spaces.

The perspectives of globalization, divided into networks and flows, borders and borderzones, and transnational approaches, inform this study regarding how global and local processes can be analyzed, and, additionally, the nuanced literature on cities in the context of globalization highlights the value in seeing cities and its various spaces through a reflexively critical transnational lens. The visual section is comprised of three components, informing the project through visual culture, images, and seeing. In many ways, the three parts work together to form an understanding of the way the visual social processes can operate and impact our environment. By including Mirzoeff's (2011) notions of visuality and countervisuality, which complicate perspectives of visual social processes with a discussion of power and expanding an analytical frame to encompass the three components I identified, and rather than segregating them from the literature of perspectives of globalization in the construction of a theoretical frame, the overall frame utilized for this study can become more robust. The intention is to work

toward this more powerful theoretical lens by merging perspectives on globalization and treatment of cities with the perspectives on the visual, which help navigate the complexities of transnational and immigrant visual urban spaces.

The synthesized framework utilized in this study are shaped by notions of visuality, countervisuality, and transnational urbanism, which allows a complication of the broad strokes intimated by Mirzoeff (2010) regarding the power dynamics amongst the oppressors and the oppressed. Transnational urbanism provides a discourse regarding immigrant communities and their lives in urban spaces that they occupy, asserting an intersection of citizenship. It also exemplifies a different agency that can be harnessed by the oppressed, that can harness the rules and policies that have been constructed by the powerful, in other words, visuality. Still, this does not necessarily equate to being able to complete control the visual field, but forces the powerful entities of these spaces to contend with the less powerful communities, often by changing their own policies and practices to reassert the legitimacies of the lopsided power dynamics, as it will be shown in the upcoming chapters.

CHAPTER 3: TRANSNATIONAL MOMENTS AND MOVEMENTS

The dramatic tales of Koreans who traveled across the Pacific Ocean to this side of the world are no longer common in the current wave of Korean immigrants, though there are similar stories in more recent immigrants from war-torn or otherwise politically imbalanced and unstable nations. Still, the current Korean immigrants' transnational identities and lives, in many ways, reflect and reverberate from previous generations of immigrant life. In Los Angeles, these transnational moments and movements in history gave birth to and continuously shape Koreatown. This chapter helps provide a foundation of understanding how the type of transnational urban space has been produced. Because something was once transnational does not mean that that overlap it at later points in history cannot be transnational. To argue everything is transnational is moot, as within particular moments in history and in context of specific spaces, transnationality looked different, often aided by technologies. In this dissertation, "transnational urban spaces" refers to something that is specific to the current ethnic communities that exist. These spaces are different than culturally appropriated spaces, where stereotyped versions of ethnic cultural spaces are shaped. This is another reason that the space highlights the transnational *and* immigrant communities within these urban spaces. Transnational urban spaces are shaped by transnational moments and movements, which do not take the same shape across points of time, space, and cultures. Transnational urban spaces for this project then is an accumulation of layers of past and present transnational moments and movements.

In order to provide a foundation in understanding these processes of production, this chapter examines a brief transnational history of Korean migration to Hawaii and the United States, recent transnational political activities, social and spatial aspects of "Old Koreatown," and Sa-I-Gu. Together, these examinations work to reveal two analytical discussions, one

showing the development of transnational connections and processes that influenced the formation of Koreatown in Los Angeles, and the other, ways that Koreatown's spatial identities have shaped transnational events, including Sa-I-Gu. They show how Korean and Korean American communities stake a claim on Koreatown through constructing, harnessing, and consuming the space.

A BRIEF TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY OF KOREAN MIGRATION TO HAWAII AND THE UNITED STATES

While the first wave of Korean migrants has been recognized as having arrived in Hawaii in 1903 (a United States territory at the time but not a state until 1953), the ostensible beginning of the history of transnational Korean communities in the United States, according to one of the oldest studies (Givens 1939) of the Korean community in the country, occurred in 1872 with the arrival of Korean students (five men). However, one of the earliest notable Korean arrivals in the United States, specifically in San Francisco, California, was Jae Pil Soh, or Philip Jaisohn, who arrived in April of 1885 with two others. He had fled from Korea to Japan after being part of Gapshin group, which had staged a coup d'état on December 4th in 1884 but ultimately held power for only three days (Kim 1999). He subsequently left for the United States soon after, in April of 1885. With the help of a benefactor, J. W. Hollenback, who intended him to be an evangelical missionary, Jaisohn studied at a private academy in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania but graduated from what is now George Washington University with a medical degree in 1895. During his time in school, he gained United States citizenship, making him the first naturalized Korean American.

Returning to Korea in 1896, with his family (his wife Muriel Armstrong) to join the efforts to modernize Korea and sustain its independence (from China, as well as resisting

pressures felt between Russia and Japan), he advised King Gojong and established Korea's first modern newspaper, 독립신문 (*The Independent*), and 독립협회 (the Indepent/ce Club), integral parts of Korean independence, governmental reform, and modernization. In 1898, under political pressures from conservative factions, Jaisohn left Korea and returned to Philadelphia. In 1919, when he heard of the March 1st Movement in Korea[10], a strong catalyst for the fight for independence from Japan, he became active in the United States, informing both Koreans and the rest of the United States of what was happening in Korea, in hopes of encouraging support for Korean independence. He and his life reflect the interconnected and complex relationships of how world and national events ultimately affect ways immigrants find and construct their spaces, regardless and, sometimes, in spite of, where they are.

The first recognized, documented Korean migration wave on this side of the world arrived in 1903 to Hawaii[11]. As migrant sugar plantation workers, they were brought in as a tool to stymie the growth of both population and unionizing power of the Japanese workers, who were brought in for similar reasons to stymie the Chinese workers who, for their part, were brought in to "set an 'example' for the Hawaiians" (Takaki [1989] 1998:25) working the sugar plantations. Subsequently, about 8,000 Koreans migrated to the United States between 1903 and 1920 (Takaki [1989] 1998:53), wherein 7226 of the 8000 arrived between 1903 and 1905. American Christian missionaries and the conversion of Koreans to Christianity also had a hand in influencing Korean migration (Kang 2013:10); moreover, approximately 1000 who arrived between 1905 and 1920 were almost exclusively picture brides. By 1910, approximately 2000 of the workers in Hawaii had migrated to the mainland, and about 1000 returned to Korea (Kim

[10] Officially known as the 3.1 Movement, it also known as the Manse Demonstrations.
[11] This is a much more complicated story that involved American missionaries, Japanese imperialism, and factors such as political oppression and poverty.

2011:14).

"개국진취[12]" was a phrase encouraging Korean migration, and, although it is seen as a Korean phrase mobilizing migration to Hawaii, it actually signifies a movement originating from Japan's Meiji Restoration period, reflective of Japanese imperialism in Korea as well as Japan's drive for modernization. It should also be noted that, for Koreans, while papers to leave Korea were issued by the Korean government at the time, they were "admitted under the Japanese quota" (Givens 1939:23). In other words, the Japanese passport bureau had ultimate control over visas and papers for admittance, which discriminated in favor of Japanese laborers (Givens 1939:23). The 1908 Gentleman's Agreement between the United States and Japan limited Japanese laborers, which, in turn, affected Korean laborers, as Korea had become a protectorate of Japan. According to Yō-jun Yun (1977), this was also due to the involvement by the Japanese resident-general in Korea:

> [He] installed under the protectorate treaty of November 17, 1905, believed that Japanese workers could dominate the labor force in Hawaii if the Korean government stopped sending immigrants. In fact, it attached great importance to the Korean government's decree banning immigration to Hawaii because this greatly reduced the competitors to the Japanese. Another reason for Japan to require the Korean government to stop immigration to Hawaii was her economic and military interests in Korea. Japan needed Korean workers to construct military facilities, including roads, for her expansionist policy on the Asian continent and to increase Korea's rice production for export to Japan. (P. 40)

The migration flows from Korea were further stymied with the passing of the United States' 1924 Immigration Act, also known as the Exclusion Act, which specifically targeted restricting Asian migration (Zong and Batalova 2014). Subsequently, the flow would only begin to change in 1950, directly due to the Korean War. During these intermediary decades,

[12] This seems to have been often translated as "the country is open, go forth" (Takaki [1989] 1998), but its meaning is more complex and can be argued to roughly mean, "the world is for the taking."

disillusioned migrant workers in Hawaii moved to the mainland; most settled in California, between San Francisco and Los Angeles, where there were about 1,200 in 1910, and incrementally increasing in the subsequent decades (1,677 in 1920 and 1,711 in 1940) (Takaki [1989] 1998:270). As Takaki ([1989] 1998) noted,

> Unlike the Japanese and Chinese on the mainland, the Koreans did not have their own separate ethnic economy and community. They were too few in number to have developed their own colony - their own Koreatown with its own stores, wholesalers, restaurants, services, churches, schools, and commercial networks. But the Koreans felt a strong sense of ethnicity, even more intensely than the Japanese and the Chinese. Though they lacked an economic basis for ethnic solidarity, they had neater source for community: powered by a unique 'necessity,' Koreans in America had to struggle against [Japanese] colonialism in Korea. (P. 270)

In the struggle for Korean independence from Japan, to support the Korean Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea (a government-in-exile fractured between Shanghai, Vladivostok, and Seoul [Kim 2011:26], but would later merge), "[m]any of the Korean organizations in the United States fighting for Korean independence provided the funding for the Provisional Government," sending more than an estimated $200,000 to China (Kim 2011:26). Korean churches in the United States "also became an influential political platform for the Korean independence movement" (Kang 2013:11). A transnational effort helped Korea fight for and gain its independence.

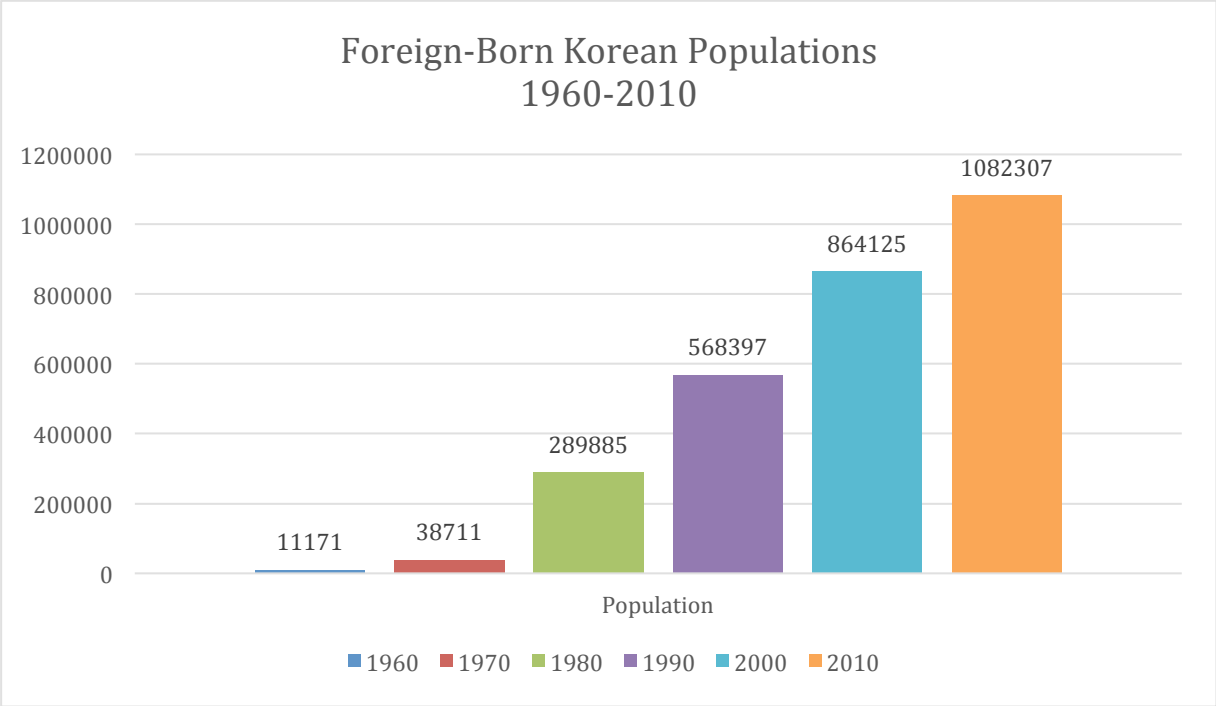

Figure 1. Foreign-Born Population (Korean) in the United States from 1960-2010 (US Census; Social Explorer).

The second wave (from 1950 to 1964) is seen as a "direct consequence of the Korean War and the U.S.-South Korean military alliance" (Zong and Batalova 2014). It comprised "young women and children of American servicemen, but also included war orphans, refugees, professionals, and students" (Zong and Batalova 2014). There were 14,027 arrivals during this period; 6,423 were "G.I. Brides," 5,348 were war orphans; and 3,256 were professionals and students (Kim 2011:72). The third wave began with the passing of the Immigration Act of 1965, and it stemmed from the political and economic instability in Korea at the time. As mapped by the Migration Policy Institute, the Korean immigrant population in the United States grew rapidly, more than tripling in the 1960s, from 11,171 to 38,711 by 1970s, and subsequently increasing from 189,885 to 568,397 by 1990, to 864,125 by 2000, and to 1,082,307 by 2010. These rapid and substantial increases are marked by political events (e.g., the 1979 assassination

of the third president of Korea, Chung Hee Park, the father of the eleventh and current president, Geun Hye Park) and financial instability (e.g., 1997 Asian Financial Crisis[13]) in Korea.

Due to the historical contexts of these waves of migration to the United States, even within Koreatown itself, there are clashing ideologies, senses of national and ethnic identity, as well as arrays of different socio-economic backgrounds represented. The differences within the Korean and Korean American communities may be attributed not only to generational differences, but also to a "growth-divergence" that occurred and still occurs even now amongst immigrant and ethnic Koreans. Such divergence relates to the timelines and development of Korean national identity; hence, specific generations of Koreans who migrated at unique historical moments within the Korean timeline are not the same as the Koreans, albeit from the same historical moments of Korean timeline, who did not immigrate. Unsurprisingly, this divergence creates layers of variants in terms of Korean nationhood, ideologies, and subsequent Korean American generations. As Kim notes,

> But when Koreans visit [Koreatown, Los Angeles], almost all of them say, "The food [in Koreatown] is good, but it's so old-fashioned/out of style/unrefined," "It's like outskirts of Korea in the 1980s" and so on… They make these statements even though they comfortably ate and played [in Koreatown] for several days. I was also no different. The Koreatown in Los Angeles I first encountered when I was appointed as a correspondent two years and six months ago was sadly disappointed. To my eyes, which were used to Seoul's tall skyscrapers and bright lights, Koreatown was the example of being an area that was the outskirts [of a city]. If they were going to make a Koreatown, why didn't it surge into a more decent/refined area? To call it old-fashioned/out of style/unrefined was a polite expression, to be honest, it had a shabby, and even dirty, feel. These opinions lasted a while.
>
> It was about a year after becoming a correspondent. Like a habit, I went to a Korean restaurant in the town. It was one of the oldest restaurants [in the area]. Without much thought, I read the menu and 'Red Pepper Paste Stew' caught my eye. Red pepper paste stew? It's made by making the soup base with red pepper paste, then adding salted

[13] At this time, the Korean government had to "liberalize laws governing the transfer of funds overseas" (Park and Kim 2008: 134) which was the result of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) restructuring.

> shrimp, tofu, and squash. But this flavor… It was the same flavor that my grandmother used to make for me in an earthen pot when I would go back to my hometown during summer vacations when I was young. I had forgotten this moist/musty(?) yet sweet taste. Instantly, I had a stream of these thoughts. 'How did they make this flavor?' 'Where did they get the salted shrimp?' 'Where did they get the red pepper paste?' 'The ingredients and seasoning is different, but how did they make it taste the same?' 'American vegetables are very big and lack flavor; how did they make the bachelor radish kimchi, pan-fried cake, anchovy stir-fry? […]'. (Kim 2013; Author translation).

One way that this divergence manifests is via Koreatown's spatial aesthetics, a commentary often attributed to other established Koreatowns such as the one in Flushing, New York. Communities of diaspora are bound to change over time and develop new forms of ethnic identities, and the divergence will differ depending on context. The Korean national identity for Koreans amplified when they began to emigrate in the late 19th century, later coinciding with Japan's annexation of Korea. Faced with being different, Othered and foreign, immigrants face the injustices related to such markers, leading to a development of a sense of "Koreanness" that did not exist before. The development of a relationship to their home country, construction of Koreanness in relation to the period of emigration, is one of the many reasons as to why I refer to Korean and Korean American communities in plural, rather than referring to them as one homogenous group. The diverse experiences of the transnational and immigrant communities also relate to not only in the period of emigration, but also whether they are first or 1.5 or second generation[14] in the United States[15]. Historically, these identities have been partially constructed

[14] Generally, first generation is a group who migrated to the United States as adults; 1.5 generation refers to a group who were young, often having migrated with their parents; second generation is comprised of US-born children of first or 1.5 generation parents.

[15] I make the distinctions here in the Korean and Korean American communities because I found that the identifications are embedded in various discussions in the communities in Koreatown. For example, a very important feature to measure, in some ways, is one's Koreanness—for certain respondents, to be younger than 12 during the time of moving to the United States means that the particular individual (who may have come to the United States at age 8, for example), is essentially second generation or Korean American. It is at times arbitrary and there were at times a competing sense for Korean Americans (often in their 20s) to prove their Koreanness by using

by transnational activism, and allowed Korean immigrant communities to participation in the growth of their homeland, though their own development and cultivation of Koreanness differed, divided by the Pacific.

RECENT TRANSNATIONAL POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN KOREATOWN

It is common to find people and moments of history of one nation forged in another. Though it is unlikely that much of the recent Korean migrant population, temporary or permanent, found in the United States currently carry the same burdens of those that came before in exile, different forms of transnational political activism still happen today. Such activities, even remnants from the times of Japanese rule of Korea since 1876 until 1945, are happening not only amongst Korean communities, but also within and in relation to Koreatown itself. The space itself helps proctor, generate, and usher transnational political activities of Korean and Korean American communities in ways imbued in the everyday, sustaining a space that reflects the history of the Korean and Korean American communities in a variety of ways. These dynamics are seen through several transnational political activities I observed in Koreatown.

Dokdo (독도)

One of the more consistently present transnational political activities in Koreatown is regarding the territorial sovereignty over Dokdo. Also known as Takeshima (by the Japanese), or Liancourt Rocks (by the United States), Dokdo is a small group of rocky islets in the Donghae

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slang, talking Korean pop culture, Korean politics, and so on. Other measures that can override the age at the time of immigration include measurements of older generations and people (international students, tourists, and some first and 1.5 generations) who self-identify as Koreans rather than Korean Americans, utilize traditional Korean food, have an English-accent when they speak in Korean, or have other unique aspects of their overall speaking, reading, and writing abilities in Korean. I wanted to acknowledge the diverse everyday experiences that shape the Korean and Korean American communities. The experiences of these communities are even more varied when considering factors such as citizenship and class.

Sea (East Sea), which is generally known as the Sea of Japan, between the Korean peninsula and Japan. Its ownership is heavily contested, with South Korea and Japan laying claim to the islets, though South Korea occupies it and the Korean Coast Guard administers it. For Koreans and Korean Americans, the dispute can be another reminder or symbol of the Japanese annexation of Korea, in which territory, as well as sovereignty, lives, freedom, personhood, and culture were altered, erased or taken away.

Figure 2. 2012. Dec 14. Photo by Author. Tom N Toms is a Korean cafe franchise that has several locations in Koreatown. This Tom N Toms-sponsored political billboard is at the cafe located on Wilshire Blvd. and Wilton Place. It states that it was based on a competition sponsored by Tom N Toms, and the phrases in English says, “Dokdo is Korean Territory,” and in Korean, it states, “Dokdo is our land.”

As noted in the billboard in the photo above, the message is mostly for Koreans and

Korean American communities who are able to read Korean, as the Korean font overwhelms the English font. The billboard targets these particular communities, and, if a non-Korean-speaking person happens to be able to read it, the spreading of the political message to non-Koreans is perhaps an added bonus. The billboard still occupies the same location, even now in 2016. In many ways, the existence of this billboard is one of defiance, as the United States, on more than one occasion, has acknowledged Japanese ownership of these islets, though the contestation is still continuous for both Korea and Japan. The negative sentiment relating to the dispute can be strong within many parts of the Korean and Korean American communities, especially among the older generations.

Figure 3. 2015. Oct 21. Photo by Author. This van was parked on Pico Blvd., on the outskirts of Koreatown. It has a banner that has the image of the Korean flag over the image of Dokdo from the sea. The phrase states: "Repent and Awake!! Japanese car riding ugly Koreans (phonetically written in Korean, the English phrase of "ugly Koreans") – how much longer will you live like a slave to the Japs?" The plain textual banner in the back is in English and states similar sentiments about not consuming Japanese products, though I do not believe that it utilizes the derogatory reference for the Japanese.

The van in the photo above seems to have been sponsored by KAF/LA (The Korean

American Federation of Los Angeles,[16] which came to existence in 1909 (kafla.org). The sentiment exemplified here is a heavy reflection of the older generations in the communities, though of course, not all of the older generation seems to agree. It was noted in *Korea Daily (중앙일보)* (Lee 2015) that some reactions to this van and its banner included the question of "Is it necessary to do this when we're in the United States?" This sentiment argues that a person living in a free country cannot be prevented from buying affordable yet reliable products. KAF/LA is considered a conservative community organization, seemingly affirmed by this sponsorship of the banner shown above. Regardless of its political leanings, it has a wide reach within Koreatown and is located near Western Avenue and Olympic Boulevard, with a wall mural that has always been a distinctive landmark in Koreatown. Though the organization has a lengthy history in Koreatown, it is also an interesting reflection of the various political ideologies that exist among Korean and Korean American communities of Koreatown and beyond, as well as a continuous reminder of the history between Korea and Japan.

The tenuous historical relationship between Korea and Japan persists today, and Dokdo is among several points of contention over which they clash. Other points of contention include Comfort Women[17] (locally, when a Comfort Women memorial statue was approved and placed in a public area in Glendale, CA, there was outcry from some members of the Japanese and Japanese American communities, that the statue was anti-Japanese), as well as Hashima,[18] which

[16] There are other branches, including the Korean American Federation of North Los Angeles as well as the Korean American Federation of Orange County.
[17] Comfort Women refer to the girls and women the Imperial Japanese Army in World War II took or tricked into forced sexual slavery.
[18] Hashima is an island that had undersea coalmines, which were mined largely by forced laborers from Korea and China, often, by young boys and teenagers, as the tunnels were too narrow for adults. The island was one of several sites that were supposed to be a symbol of Japan's Meiji industrial revolution. South Korea withdrew its objections to granting it UNESCO World Heritage Site status when Japan agreed to include the information regarding forced labor.

gained public attention through Korean news as well as one of the most popular Korean shows, 무한도전 (*Infinite Challenge*), when it gained UNESCO heritage status and began operating tours[19] on the island.

Figure 4. 2016. 4 April. Photographed by Author. English and Korean language pamphlets about Dokdo given out at the 2013 40th Los Angeles Korean Festival.

The ownership of Dokdo is something that the Korean government also continues to argue in favor of, promoting these political stances transnationally not only through the Korea Center, a tourism center operated by the government outside of Koreatown, but also through South Korean representatives and merchants coming to Koreatown during the annual Los Angeles Korean Festival.[20] In 2013, a booth at this festival promoted Dokdo as Korean territory,

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However, on the day of the announcement of Hashima's status, a debate erupted regarding the meaning of the phrase, "forced to work" or "forced labor" (Gil 2015).

[19] During *Infinite Challenge*, some cast members took a tour of the island, although the tours to the island did not necessarily mention Korean and Chinese forced labor on the island.

[20] I will discuss the Festival in a later chapter.

which had booklets,[21] videos, games to win prizes, and a raffle to win a trip to Korea, all ways in which that the Association of Commemorative Service for Anyongbok (Dokdo Promotion) attempted to spread the Korean political argument for Dokdo.

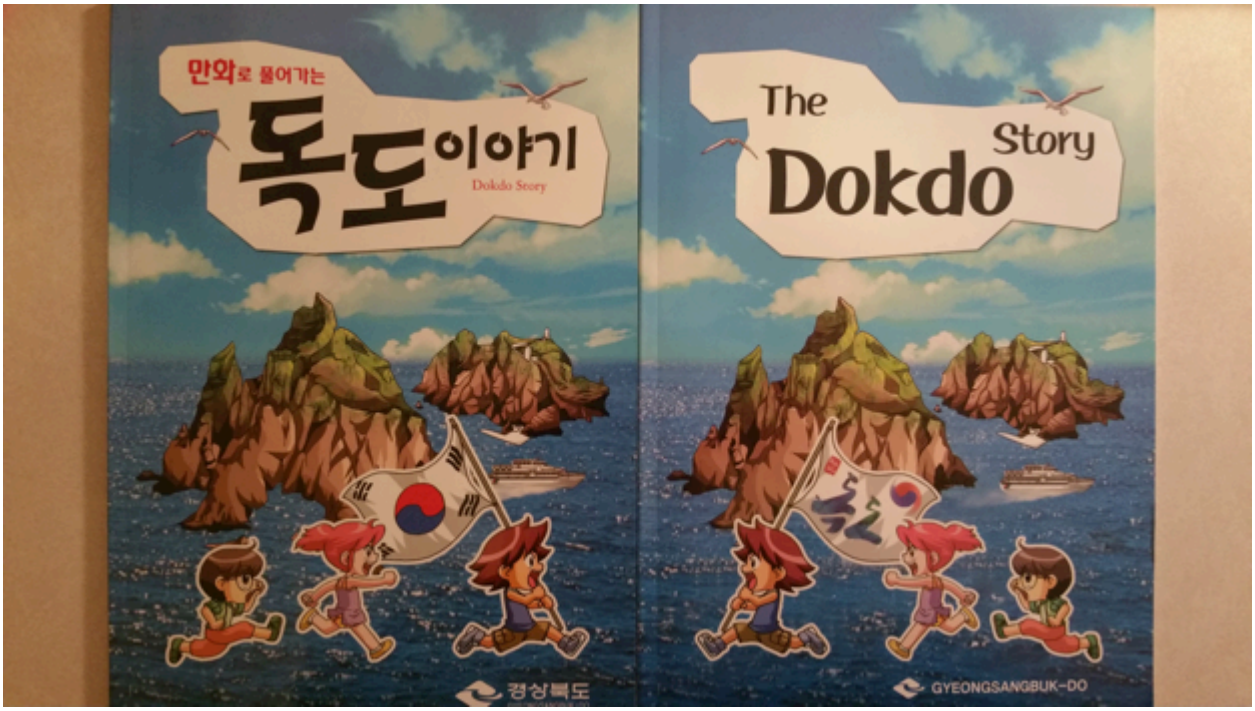


Figure 5. 2016. 4 April. Photographed by Author. English and Korean language versions of comic books about Dokdo given out at the 2013 40th Los Angeles Korean Festival.

In Figure 6, the target of the audience for the comic books seem relatively evident with the utilization of the phrase "All Koreans," meaning Korean nationals, not necessarily the Korean diaspora, affirmed by the Korean version use of the phrase "우리 국민 모두." However, the translation of the comic book into English also signals a desire to spread the message to wider audiences, recognizing the differences of the various Korean communities in and outside of Korea.

[21] The booklets were available in English.

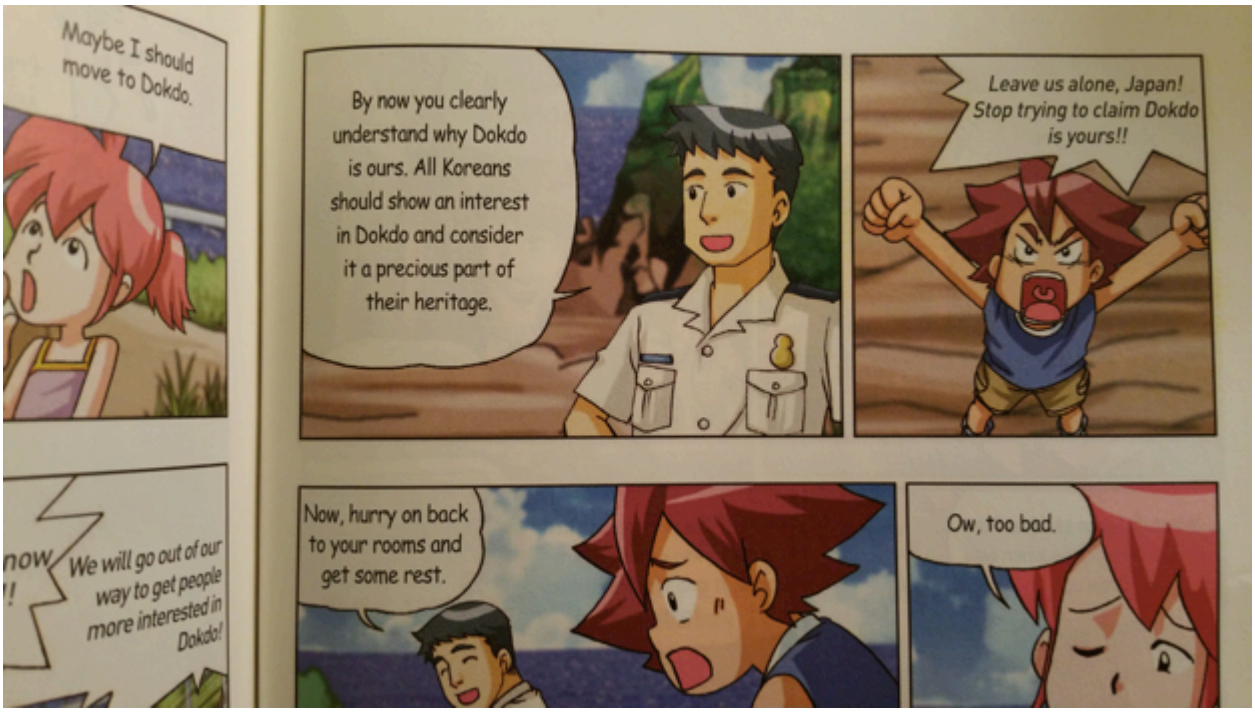


Figure 6. 2016. 4 April. Photographed by Author. This a photo of p. 57 of the comic book on Dokdo that was handed out at the 2013 40th Los Angeles Korean Festival. It is the English version that was relatively equivalently phrased in translation from Korean to English.

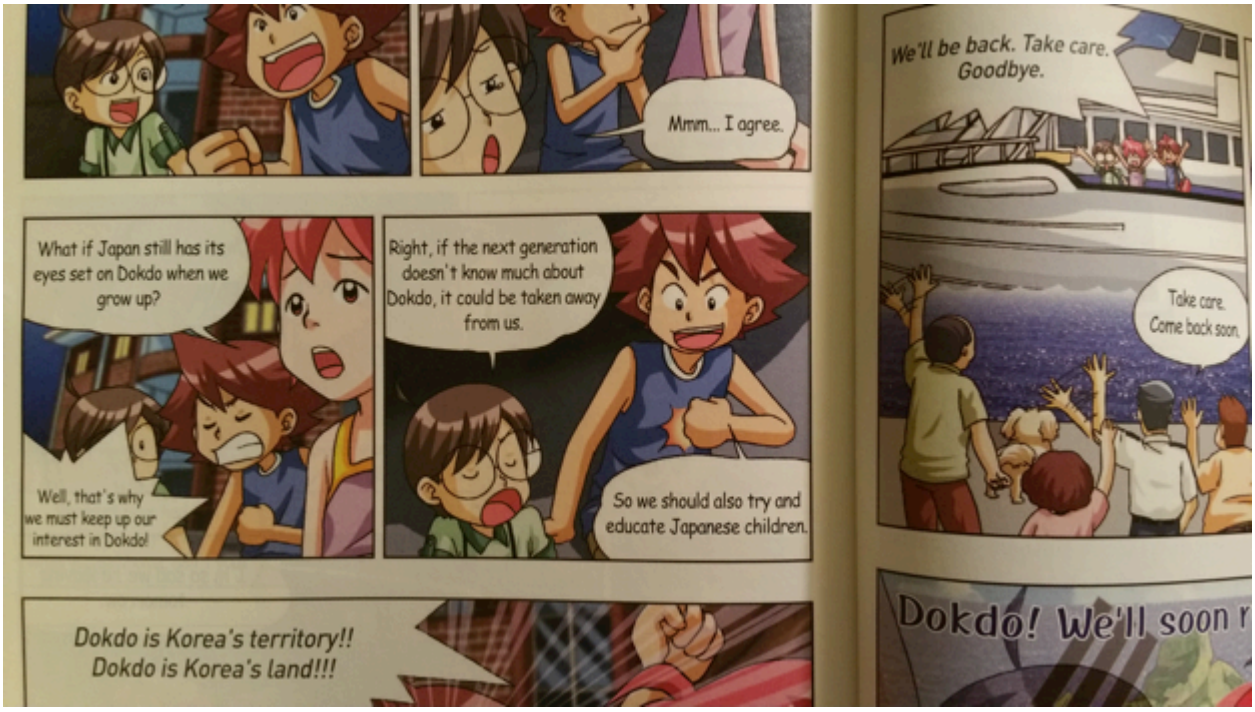


Figure 7. 2016. 4 April. Photographed by Author. This a photo of p. 58 of the comic book on Dokdo that was handed out at the 2013 40th Los Angeles Korean Festival. The English version had relatively equivalent phrasing in Korean and English.

The informational comic books and other materials given out on Dokdo, like the other examples of the political transmissions outside of Korea, seek to reach Korean, Korean American, and perhaps non-Korean audiences, in hopes of visibly constructing their arguments in a consumable manner. In Figure 7, one character states, "Right, if the next generation doesn't know much about Dokdo, it could be taken away from us," as the other character replies, "So we should also try to educate Japanese children." In the last panel in Figure 7, the same character shouts, "Dokdo is Korea's territory!! Dokdo is Korea's land!!" These passages then show a multitude of desires to emphasize the Korean claims to the islets, and insinuate an issue with the way that Japanese children are taught and socialized regarding the islets. This connects to the ways in which Japanese school history books have been accused of being whitewashed, not only in terms of Dokdo, but also on the issues of forced labor and comfort women, also something that is still considered as a contentious point in the relationship between Japan and Korea as well as China and other countries.

These political agendas introduced into Koreatown serve to not only inform, but to construct a specific image of nationality and what it means to be Korean, regardless of citizenship. Because of the Koreatown context, it is possible to blur boundaries of cultural and political citizenship in political activities such as the Dokdo campaigns. As a space, Koreatown serves as a stage for Korean government and other organizations to debut these activities to the public. The fact that these campaigns are located in Koreatown also serves to show that the space has as distinct Korean ethnic identity, strengthening a Korean and Korean American claim to the area. Though the Dokdo campaigns have "passive" results, meaning that the political position promoted are absorbed in passing, and may or may not have an explicit impact on individuals, there are other activities where individuals vigorously participate in transnational political

activities.

Involvement of Korean National Intelligence Service and the Korean Presidential Election

One of the groups I followed and observed during my time in the field in 2013 was 한국사회연구모임 (Korean Society Research Group). The relatively short-lived group comprised about a dozen young Koreans and Korean Americans who mostly grew up in Los Angeles and Korea, although there were also two international students. The group began with high school or college friends, or co-volunteers at the International Student Rights Center, their daily lives centering in and around Koreatown in various ways with the majority of them living in or near Koreatown. Most of the attendees were moderate to liberal political orientation, primarily men, and age range between 20 and 27 at the time. They met once a week in Koreatown, often in the Korean or Korean American owned cafes around the area, discussing, at times heatedly arguing, political positions, which would later be resolved or extended, generally, over food and drinks in Koreatown. They formed the group for political discussions and to remain informed, as well as for constructing ways of participating in the intense debates that were happening in Korea and in the diaspora about the election in December 2012.

In these discussions, conducted in Korean, they expressed anger, lamentation, and disappointment with the election results, in which Geun-Hye Park was elected as the 11th President of South Korea. The country was generationally divided about Park as president because of her father, Chung-Hee Park, the third president of South Korea (1962-1979), who was considered to be an autocrat, a dictator, and a hero by the time of his assassination. The election had a voter turnout of about 76 percent (Carter Eckert from "Panel Discussion": 50), a larger turnout than the previous presidential election by about 13 percent. It was certainly not the highest voter turnout in South Korea's presidential election history, which would perhaps turn

out to be one of several reasons behind Park's electoral victory with 51.6 percent of the popular vote (Panel Discussion: 50).

Table 1. Presidential Election Voting Breakdown by Age Group and Two Main Candidates (based on exit polls)[a]

Candidate	Age Groups				
	20s	**30s**	**40s**	**50s**	**60s or older**
Park[b]	33.7%	33.1%	44.1%	62.5%	72.3%
Moon	65.8%	66.5%	55.6%	37.4%	27.5%

[a] Source is Gajados and Bendini (2013:4).
[b] The two main candidates were Geun Hye Park and Jae Jung Moon.

She won the election to become the first female president of South Korea, much to the chagrin of the younger (under 40) generations, including this group's members. When rumors and accusations began to surface regarding possible manipulation of citizens through social networking services (SNS) by the Korean National Intelligence Service to help Park win the election, 한국사회연구모임 ("Korean Society Research Group") had multiple conversations about what was happening and publicly posted an open letter to voice dissent in what they viewed to be a questionable election and electoral process, regardless of their citizenship. With the letter, the members of the group sought to participate by adding their voice to the "[u]niversity students [in Korea], who have staged relatively few political protests in recent years, have held several rallies on campuses and in downtown Seoul, shouting, 'Out with Park Geun-hye!'" (Choe 2013).

Members of the group were variously angry, frustrated, and concerned for the future of the country that many of them had not lived in since adolescence, if not younger, and where most did not live anymore. In many of these conversations, their sense of connection to South Korea was highlighted in their reference to South Korea as "our country," and when members who held United States citizenship spoke those words, it highlighted a transnational sense of belonging they had constructed for themselves, despite being an ocean away. Their desire to render

themselves visible in the discourse of the political activism that South Korea had not seen from its youth, in, perhaps, decades, was an example of their desire to sustain transnational lives. Some actively pursued ways to be involved additionally by participating in political rallies in Koreatown, especially during this time when suspicions over the validity of Geun-Hye Park's presidency.

Their transnational political activity exemplifies not only of the desire to connect with home, regardless of their citizenship or lack of plans to live in Korea, but also shows that their lives are invariably rooted in Koreatown because it is where these political outlets exist. For many Korean and Korean Americans, to participate in transnational political activity is tied with the locality and identity of Koreatown, and similar to the Dokdo campaigns, these activities strengthen the identity of Koreatown through spaces utilization, as they perform their political activism through rallies, demonstrations, and meetings. The occupation of the space through these activities helps bolster the Korean and Korean American communities' claim to Koreatown by becoming visible, which in turn helps the participants gain a stronger voice because of the Korean ethnic identity of Koreatown.

Sewol

The 2014 sinking of Sewol (4.16 세월호 침몰사고), a ferry that capsized with 476 onboard, is considered to be one of the largest tragedies in recent memory for South Korea, as 295 died, and 9 are still missing. Of the 476 people on board, 337 were from Danwon High School, comprising 325 students and 12 teachers on a class trip. Of these passengers, only 75 students survived, and the rescued principal committed suicide a few days after. This tragedy affected the nation as well as the Korean diaspora, as the failures of various institutions (the

ferry's company, government, coast guard, and media) involved before and after the sinking were discovered, and those institutions were found to have been incompetent, inefficient, and cruel. This traumatized the psyche of the nation, leading to what some labeled as a "collective depression" leading to a decline in consumer spending for the duration of the month.

> The emotional distress not only affected the mental health but also the economy [….] From April 16-20, credit card use at the five biggest card companies plummeted 7.6 percent from the previous week to 3.5 trillion won ($3.4 billion) [….] National parks and amusement parks also saw a decline in visitors. In the first weekend after the disaster, the number of visitors to Children's Grand Park in Seoul fell by almost 40 percent (Lee 2014).

This tragedy affected many Korean and Korean American communities in Los Angeles, young and old, leading to creation of groups such as "Hope4SewolMiracles," and the civilian construction of an impromptu memorial in front of the South Korean Consulate in Koreatown. The memorial, reflecting the campaign happening in South Korea, comprised yellow ribbons (meant to symbolize hope that the missing would return safely), Post-It notes, photographs, and signs, in Korean and English.

A month after the sinking, at a cafe near Wilshire Boulevard and Vermont Avenue, I observed a family who had attended a Sewol rally (especially identifiable because of the yellow ribbons they wore), comprising a father, mother, and two young children looking tired, the parents seeming especially weary. I overheard them deeply sigh multiple times as they sipped their drinks, and silently watched their kids, seeming drained from the rally and the grief and frustration over Sewol. The rally, held on Wilshire Boulevard and Vermont Avenue, just one block from the South Korean Consulate, demanded that South Korean government agencies take responsibility and find justice for those affected by the tragedy. This rally, though mostly in Korean, had components also in English, seen in some of the fliers and posters. This event was held in an area not necessarily in the center of Koreatown, but in a pedestrian-heavy space that

was near the South Korean Consulate. It was visible to Korean and non-Korean ethnic communities, and families and young men and women, as well as the elderly, attended the event.

Figure 8. 2014. A rally held on the corner of Western Avenue and Vermont Avenue Photo credit: Sang Hee Yeon (2014).

They sat on the ground, forming a semi-circle around the speakers, and were located at the entrance and exit to the Wilshire/Vermont Metro station, one of the more constantly used bus stops, and on one of the busiest traffic corridors in the area. Though it was a space to collectively mourn people they likely did not know, people who died an ocean away, they used the space to voice their discontent toward the government institutions and agencies, some as Korean citizens, some as part of the Korean ethnic community. The rally, in a way, became more meaningful in its location, affirming the transnational connection between Korean and Koreatown that was richer and more complex than the connections via of monies, bodies, and goods.

Whether they are transnational political activities implemented by the Korean government or reactions to the actions of the Korean government, these activities are part of Koreatown and Koreatown is a part of them. The activities have a home in Koreatown because of its spatial identity is imbued with a Korean ethnic identity, they have an audience and they have participants, and in return, these activities also play a role in strengthening and reaffirming the "Korea" part of Koreatown. The transnationality of the Korean immigrant community has always had this effect on Koreatown in Los Angeles.

"OLD KOREATOWN"

Between 1900 and the 1920s in Los Angeles,[22] "a small group of Koreans lived around Bunker Hill […] an area where nonwhites were allowed to reside, centering around a building that housed the Young Korean Academy, the Korean National Association Los Angeles brand headquarters and Chang Ho Ahn's family" house (Kim 2011:8). Chang Ho (Dosan) Ahn is an important historical figure in Korean history, not only as a Korean independence activist, philosopher, and a key founding member of the Korean Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea, but also as a noted leader in the relatively nascent Korean immigrant community in the United States.[23] He, with his wife Helen, had migrated to San Francisco from Korea as a student in 1902, where he emerged in a leadership position for the Korean community in San Francisco. He and his family moved to Los Angeles in 1914. In 1926, he departed for Shanghai and, a few years later, was captured by the Japanese, imprisoned, and released to a hospital, where he died in 1938, from an illness likely related to imprisonment and torture. Though his body is interred in

[22] In all of Los Angeles County, the numbers shifted from 60 to less than 300 between 1906 and 1939 (Givens 1939:24); other notable areas in California were Dinuba, Reedley, San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, and Delano (Givens 1939:24).
[23] It is also believed that he and another man wrote the lyrics to the Korean national anthem still used today.

Seoul, a memorial was held in the United States by the Korean National 10 days after his death (Kim 2011:47). His family remained in Los Angeles, and his children grew up and left their own marks in Asian American history. His eldest daughter, Susan Ahn (later Susan Ahn Cuddy), became the first Asian-American woman to join the United States Navy, defied anti-miscegenation laws to marry Francis Cuddy, and worked for the Library of Congress and the National Security Agency. His oldest, Philip Ahn, became an actor and was the first Asian American to receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Ahn's family, houses, and neighborhood have been symbols of and for the Korean immigrants' community during times of political strife in the homeland, and they became a home away from home community space.

Shifting Spatial Identities

Including this form of community space, there have been several official and unofficial forms of Koreatown in Los Angeles. What some scholars (e.g., Park 2012; Kim 2011) refer to as "Old Koreatown" is the concentration of the Korean community and Korean businesses in a particular area, rather than official recognition as Koreatown. As mentioned above, one of the first old Koreatowns was centered on the house of Chang Ho Ahn in Bunker Hill, a poor, working-class neighborhood, which has been the continuous pattern of the locations of "Koreatown." By the 1930s, the Los Angeles Korean community shifted west and settled around Jefferson Boulevard, between Vermont Avenue and Normandie Avenue (Kim 2011:9; preserveamerica.gov). By the third wave of Korean immigration, the cluster of small businesses and community shifted west again, into the current location of Koreatown.

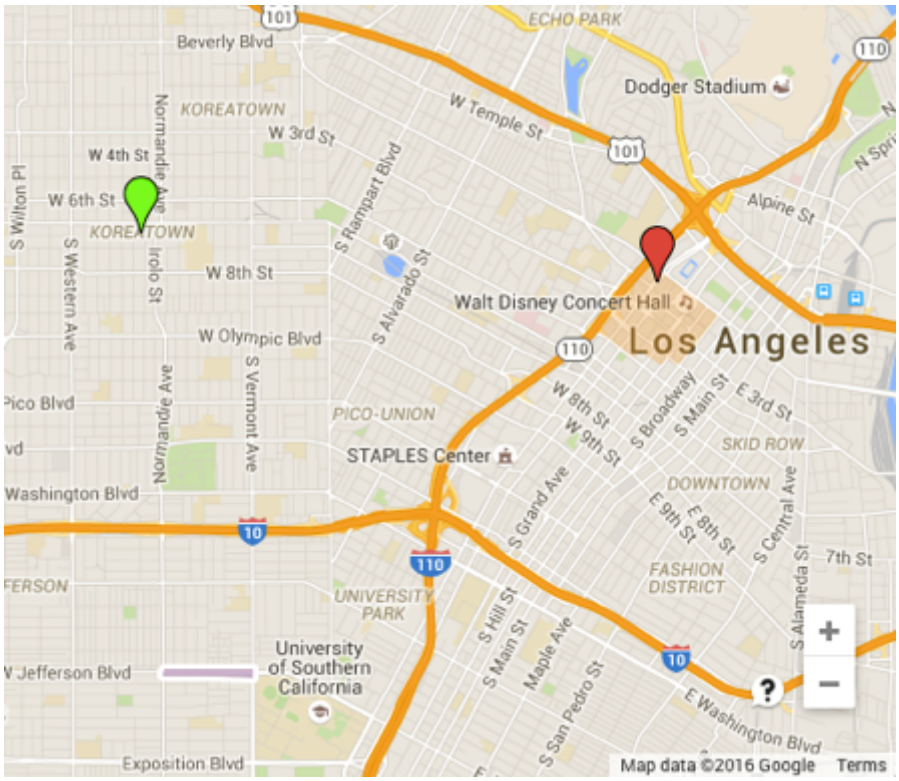


Figure 9. From Right to left, areas highlighted are Bunker Hill, "Old Koreatown" (in purple by USC), and current location of Koreatown (green marker). The orange marker indicates the location of the original Ahn house.

Today, Bunker Hill is composed of several Los Angeles architectural markers, including the Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Broad, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and skyscrapers that are part of the Los Angeles skyline. The area has been developing since 1955, and is still in construction today, as part of a multi-decade redevelopment project. In the 1930s, Los Angeles was racially segregated, as it was the "first city to apply racially restrictive covenants in real estate in the 1920," separating white neighborhoods from communities of color (Kim 2011:35). This historical *de jure* segregation has reverberations in Los Angeles even today, affecting how downtown and its surrounding areas are perceived. In the 1930s, "Old Koreatown" was in the West Adams district (Kim 2011: 35), on Jefferson Boulevard between Normandie Avenue and Vermont Avenue, by University of Southern California (USC), which is currently in the process

of being redeveloped, as part of USC's 20-year development plan as well its preceding expansion plans at least since 2009. As noted by Boyarsky (1977:I1), "Meanwhile, immigration goes on, from Mexico and the Far East. The city has a new ghetto, Koreatown, stretching along Olympic Blvd."

The current location of Koreatown began in the late 1960s, in conjunction with the third wave of Korean immigration and the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, which abolished the quota system (for national origins). The shape of the boundaries has gone through several changes for a multitude of reasons, currently sustained in various shapes, depending on the city or city-related office's definition of the boundaries. In general, at minimum, it is between Vermont Avenue and Wilton Avenue, stretching across from, Beverly Boulevard to Pico Boulevard. If the boundaries were conceived as "lived-in" or experienced boundaries, parts of Koreatown could be considered to expand all the way to Crenshaw Boulevard on Olympic Boulevard as well as Wilshire Boulevard. Others who worked to represent Koreatown during the formalization process have argued that, on Western Avenue, Koreatown boundaries would stretch all the way to Melrose Avenue. These boundaries of Koreatown will be further discussed in the following chapter.

With each move, Koreatown grew in terms of physical size as well as population, and various policy shifts were implemented, from segregation to desegregation to the abolishment of the quota system for immigration. The shape of the space and its identity were also altered beginning in April 29, 1992 by one of the costliest and large-scale civil unrest in the United States.

SA-I-GU

Many of the respondents between the ages of 30 and 60 vividly remembered their

experience during the turbulence in late April of 1992. It encapsulated for many a sense of worry, fear, and political awakening born out of frustration of watching the Korean and Korean American community be ignored. As one of my respondents, Shawn, remembered,

> I remember coming down the 101, you know, when you pass the Capital building you get to see the city. And, just seeing the plumes of smoke, and just thinking like, 'Man, this looks like a news coverage of Lebanon or something;' the Middle-East, you know, like a war zone. And so, you know by the time we got off the freeway, driving down Western, you know, they were like random places being looted, and you saw smoke in the air, and you know just wow, it was just crazy, it was just crazy. You know… just… we were all very worried. [….] I was still rapping at the time with some guys from Ktown, you know […] I think that was like the beginning of my like whatever political activism or whatever. Like, you know, it hit me hard. And so, a couple of days later, I found out […] on the news that they were going to have a big rally at Ardmore Park. So, I just went down there on my own. You know just trying to figure out what the fuck was going on. You know, I think part of me was like I gotta do something. I didn't know what I could contribute. (Voice 027 Shawn, 17:36)

Sa-I-Gu (pronounced sa-ee-gu) is one of the many names for the upheaval that occurred in Los Angeles between the 29th of April and 4th of May in 1992. It is commonly referred to as the "1992 Los Angeles Riots," "Rodney King Riots," "1992 Los Angeles Civil Unrest," and "South Central Riots" among others. A sharp turning point for the Korean and Korean American communities as well as Koreatown itself, those in the Korean community often refer to it as 4.29, 4.29 폭동, or Sa-I-Gu. 폭동 has several meanings, including a riot, rebellion, uprising, or insurrection, which ultimately depends not only on context, but also on the lens of the person utilizing the term. Sa-I-Gu, referring to the number four, two, nine (4,2,9), is reflective of how Koreans commemorate notable events with dates, a term commonly seen amongst younger generations. The label Sa-I-Gu best fits the events in the context of Koreatown itself, as the utilization of the terms "civil unrest" or "uprising" in reference to Sa-I-Gu still evokes a contentious reaction from various parts of the Korean and Korean American community, who still remember feelings of betrayal, abandonment, fear, and sadness. This was especially evident

at a 2012 conference held in Koreatown to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Sa-I-Gu[24], when an elderly Korean woman stood, took the microphone, and lamented about younger generations, including the panelists, utilizing the term "uprising" or any similar phrasing rather than the term "riot." She insinuated that they were apologists who failed to remember or acknowledge the suffering of the Korean ethnic community during Sa-I-Gu, in an effort to appease the black community. This highlighted not only the varying perspectives that existed within the Korean ethnic communities, but the incongruous navigations from isolated to more expanding understandings of the place of Korean and Korean Americans in the realm of Asian America and the United States.

Sa-I-Gu's complicated origins have deep historical roots based on the social inequities and inequalities that marked the areas most affected by the events. Communities that were the most affected were some of the most disempowered populations of Los Angeles, by race, class, and citizenship, often rendered invisible and visible at the convenience of those in power of the City, the State, and Nation. While Sa-I-Gu is often thought to be the direct result of the jury acquittal of the officers involved in the video-documented beating of Rodney King, it was one of many incidents that led to the upheaval.

External to the generally known historical social inequities in the areas, there was also the shooting of Latasha Harlins by Soon Ja Du, which is sometimes recognized (Lee 1999; Sanchez, et al. 2012) as an example of the so-called conflict between the two communities, though the relationship of the incident to Sa-I-Gu has been weakened in the general collective memory, generally due to media constructions as well as to scholarly erasures. Yet the incident is one that

[24] This conference was one of several at the time, including one held at the AME church and at the University of Southern California, that focused heavily on "moving on" through community organizing and organizations.

cannot be forgotten; the build-up to Harlins' death, to the trial, and sentencing, all symbolize the overarching ideology of the United States, which bell hooks (2004) frames as "imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy"[25]

> Everytime I wanna go get a fuckin brew
> I gotta go down to the store with the two
> Oriental one-penny countin' motherfuckers
> That make a nigga made enough to cause a little ruckus
> Thinkin' every brother in the world's out to take
> So they watch every damn move that I make
> They hope I don't pull out a gat and try to rob
> They funky little store, but bitch, I got a job
> ("Look you little Chinese motherfucker
> I ain't tryin' to steal none of yo' shit, leave me alone"
> "Mother-fuck you!"[26])
> So don't follow me, up and down your market
> Or your little chop suey ass will be a target of the nationwide boycott
> Juice with the people, that's what the boy got
> So pay respect to the black fist
> Or we'll burn your store, right down to a crisp
> And then we'll see ya
> 'Cause you can't turn the ghetto, into Black Korea
> "I do fuck you"
> (Ice Cube 1991)

Harlins was a 15 year-old black girl whom Du believed to be stealing orange juice because Du observed Harlins putting it in the backpack but had failed to see the money Harlins had in her hand. In the video, their physical altercation is captured: (1) Du grabs Harlins' sweater and backpack; (2) Harlins strikes Du with her fists, which knock Du to the ground; (3) Du throws a stool at Harlins, Harlins picks up the orange juice from the ground and throws it on the counter; (4) Du brings the handgun to the counter, and Harlins turns to leave; and (5) the gun is fired and

[25] She discussed "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" in a documentary called, *Cultural Criticism and Transformation* (Jhally 1997), as a phrase that "would actually remind us continually of the interlocking systems of domination that define our reality [….]" rather than focusing on one (e.g., gender or race).

[26] The song begins with the partial dialogue between a black customer and a pair of storeowners who are an Asian immigrant married couple from the film *Do the Right Thing* (1989), and the subsequent phrases in quotations are from the film.

Harlins is shot, leading to Harlins' death. "Black Korea" by Ice Cube (1991), thought to be inspired by her death, exemplifies tensions that were in Los Angeles, especially in areas of South Central and Koreatown. This song became a symbol for many different communities, which included those who agreed that this song reflected the oppression, dehumanization, and types of violence perpetrated by racist Korean people against black people, as well as those who agreed that this song reflected the hateful dehumanization and types of violence perpetrated by racist black people toward Korean people. The confrontation happened two weeks after the Rodney King video surfaced, and also led to a controversial trial, verdict, and sentencing, where Du was convicted, by a jury, of voluntary manslaughter and using a firearm in a felony,[27] but the judge sentenced Du to only five years of probation, four hundred hours of community service, and a $500 fine. This case spotlighted the high concentrations of Korean owners of various liquor and small grocery stores in Los Angeles as well as in other large cities, such as New York, and an analysis that Koreans were oppressing black communities in blighted areas. However, the case itself split opinion within the Korean and Korean American communities, where it was thought "many in the [Korean] community understood Du's actions but did not defend them" (Ford and Wilkinson 1991). Though this did not happen in Koreatown itself, and this case certainly was not the singular reason behind the damages, it nonetheless affected the space and the Korean and Korean American communities, who collectively incurred $400 million of the total $1 billion[28] of property damages resulting from the upheaval.

[27] The combination of the convictions meant Du was eligible for a maximum of 16-year prison sentence.

[28] The final numbers range from $770 million to over $1 billion. An estimate that does not shift, however, is how the Korean and Korean Americans were held responsible for about half of the total damages (regardless of the final number).

Previous Upheavals

Sa-I-Gu was not the first time that Los Angeles had experienced violent eruptions. What happened in the 1871 "Chinese Massacre," the 1943 "Zoot-Suit Riot," or the 1965 "Watts Riot (or Rebellion)," long reflected standing issues that have been present and have not yet been resolved. As historian Victor Jew (2010) noted, "The anti-Chinese massacre of 1871 […] sparked into being by issues of race and class and set off by a gendered instance of orientalism. [It] forecast many of the themes that characterized the racialized flashpoint of the twentieth century" (p. 110). It was one of the first multi-ethnic upheaval, mobs comprised of mostly white men, as well as Mexican, Irish, French, and German. The 1871 Chinese Massacre is considered to have "midwifed the abrupt start of American modernization, changing Los Angeles from the California-ruled pueblo to the US city whose governance was always guided by commercial elites" (Jew 2010:112). This was partially due to the embarrassment that the city felt and feared that it would affect its development, as the violent tragedy became not only national, but also world news. This shame and inevitable instability led to a sense of urgency to market itself anew, rendering the massacre invisible in its histories, as it was a bloody smudge on its Golden State image.

As Abelmann and Lie (1995) noted citing White (1991) McWilliams (1973), and Davis 1992, "In 1950, 78 percent of African Americans in Los Angeles lived in Watts or South Central [as well as] Little Tokyo, which African Americans moved into and renamed Bronzeville after Japanese Americans were interned during World War II" (p. 97). Although there had been an industrial boom between the 1950s and 1960s in the area, Watts and South Central Los Angeles were negatively affected by the introduction of freeways, which displaced Watts, which had been "'a key junction and interchange between the long distance truck routes, the inter-urban and the street railways" (Abelmann and Lie 1995:97). Thus, the beginnings of the 1965 Watts Riot were

constructed by existing racial and economic inequalities that additionally played a role in the moment of eruption. "[A]n incident of police misconduct unleashed cumulative rage at the police and at pervasive racial discrimination, leading to the explosion in Watts, a predominantly African American area. The casualties included 34 deaths, 1032 injuries, and 3952 arrests" (Dreier 2003:39). Nearly a quarter of a century later, Sa-I-Gu was similarly triggered by the economic inequalities as well as "by the acquittal of police officers for the beating of Rodney King, riots erupted in South Central Los Angeles, a mixed black and Latino section of the city. The casualty figures were significantly larger: 55 deaths, 2383 injuries, and more than 17000 arrests" (Dreire 2003:39)[29].

Though the Watts Riots led to an energizing of "the city's liberal forces to find an alternative to [Mayor] Forty and his conservative agenda" (Dreier 2003:39) leading to the Mayoral election of Tom Bradley (he was mayor for five terms, or 20 years), the actual areas affected by the upheaval in Watts in 1965 had not fully recovered by the explosion of Sa-I-Gu, nor would they be considered fully restored today. Each of these moments of history mark eruptions of tension from not only the historical inequity and inequalities that existed based on race, but also from socio-economic class, how transnational and immigrant communities were considered and treated as the *other*, and an overall construction of citizenship in not only Los Angeles, but also the United States. As Ong, Bonacich, and Cheng (1994) found, while there was not necessarily a singular image of either community in the eyes of the other communities, there were pervasive lore, myths, and stereotypes that also affected the way some members of each community saw the other.

[29] The death count varies depending on the sources and whether one considers certain deaths to be Sa-I-Gu related.

Chaos

> **Caller**: 84th and Vermont […]. Super Swap Meet.
> **Radio Host**: Do you operate a clothing store there?
> **C**: Yes, operate a clothing store (sob)
> **R**: Is there a Johnny's Clothing Store?
> **C**: Johnny's Clothing Store is a men's store […] did it burn there?
> **R**: Yes it's on fire right now.
> **C**: Oh no (sob) that's our […] what about our Super Swap Meet? Above Johnny's?
> **R**: There's a big fire right next to Johnny's Clothing Store.
> **C**: Right next where?
> **R**: The attached building.
> **C**: Is there, is there no way for a fire truck to go?
> **R**: As of now, fire trucks have not been seen at all
> **C**: Is there no way to contact them?
> **R**: Even if called, in this situation, they must be covering another area […]
> **C**: [talking over Radio Host] But we have our life depending on that place, what are we supposed to do? We didn't buy fire insurance; insurance has to be individually bought. The building, the building probably has it but we each […] merchant, we don't have that insurance the fire insurance.
> **R**: Most Koreans are this way?
> **C**: Yes. I know of one or two people with insurance, the rest [of the merchants] don't have it; because [we/they] are small business owners […] But we invested almost all our money; we can't even eat or make a living without that place. What are we supposed to do?
> (Unknown Caller, Radio Korea Recordings CD1, Track 1, 0:03-1:35, Author translation)

The above is an excerpt from the Radio Korea broadcast during the upheaval. A core Korean-ethnic media outlet in Los Angeles, the station initially acted as an information point, broadcasting incoming calls from the public, consisting of reports and questions about businesses that were being looted and burned. This particular section from the selection of recordings Radio Korea allowed access to, exemplifies a core lived-experience from Sa-I-Gu; Korean small shop owners who invested not just their life savings, but also living day to day, dependent mostly, if

not solely, on their business, not making enough to be able to afford insurance,[30] which was "unaffordable or nonexistent" (Steele 1992: 6), and the overwhelming sense of helplessness, despair, and injustice:

> Our [Korean] people running businesses in those bla[ck neighborhoods]… South Central, we are unjustly receiving the most damage, as far as I know. (1:05-1:19 Track 2 Radio Korea - day2?; Author translation).

Initially, the station urged workers and storeowners not to come into the affected areas until they were informed that the police were not going to come. At this point, they changed their broadcast message, urging listeners to stay and protect their livelihood. Merchants, security guards, and volunteers began to arm themselves and set up barricades to protect their businesses, and notably, many of the Korean men were trained in arms, as they came to the United States after completing their mandatory 2-3-year military service in Korea.

Sa-I-Gu is a complicated part of the history of Korean and Korean American communities, especially in Los Angeles (though in other cities and states, it would not be uncommon for young [including Korean/Korean American] generations to remember or know of what happened at this time). While racism existed within Korean/Korean American and black communities, the way in which the narratives unfolded showed the complication of Asian American positionalities in the United States. Korean and Korean American communities were portrayed as both being closer to whites in terms of power and privilege in certain narratives, whereas in others, they were treated as foreigners, model minorities, and cast as the intermediary between the privileged and under-privileged communities. These varying narratives in some ways rendered the Korean and Korean American communities simultaneously invisible and

[30] For some, even with insurance, they were unable to get financial reimbursement because the more affordable, smaller, local insurance companies went bankrupt due to the upheaval. It is estimated that two-thirds were not insured (Banks 2012).

visible.

Table 2. Ages of Those Killed in Sa-I-Gu[a]

Age Groups									
<18	18	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s	80s	Unknown
5	4	20	19	7	4	2	0	1	1

[a] LA Times (http://spreadsheets.latimes.com/la-riots-deaths/)

There are varied numbers of deaths that occurred during this period, from 63 to 53 people. According to the *Los Angeles Times* (2012) which had mapped these, 28 were black, 19 were Latino, 14 were white, and 2 were Asian (http://spreadsheets.latimes.com/la-riots-deaths/). Eight deaths were by law enforcement, two by the National Guard, and the rest ranged from gunshots, strangling, stabbings, and fire-related deaths. Four were killed during incidents in Koreatown. Two were accidental (one of them was an 18-year-old Korean American male shot in Koreatown). While some of the deaths noted are marked as "riot-related" even though the individual may have died after it was officially over, the count above fails to take into account of all of the suicides in the aftermath of Sa-I-Gu.

Media Coverage: Visual Construction of Varying Narratives

Multiple studies have examined and problematized an issue rising out of the ashes of the 1992 upheaval—media coverage. For example, Ban-Adams (1997) found that, in the *Los Angeles Times*, a year prior to the upheaval, 61 items about Korean-Americans were written, of which 35 focused on racial tensions involving the Korean and Korean American communities, and, of those, 34 were about the racial tension between "Korean Americans and African Americans" (p. 70). This pattern was not the sole problem of the *Los Angeles Times*, and the racialized and Othered journalistic lens seeped into the coverage of the upheaval.

Sa-I-Gu was not the first nationally televised upheaval nor the first to be categorized as a

"race riot." Still, as Abelmann and Lie (1995) stated citing Simmons (1993), it would be inaccurate to consider 1992 as a mere continuation of what occurred in 1965. "Although there is friction between Black customers and Korean merchants, this issue was overstated by the media" (p. 157). The mainstream coverage of what was happening in 1992 was shaped by the news helicopters flying, high above, along with the sparse news crews who came through on the ground for footage. Two recordings are the most notable and remembered (if at all). The first is the beating of Reginald Denny, and the other is the footage of Korean business owners seemingly shooting out into the crowd.

One of the most enduring media images from Koreatown during this time, the footage of two older Korean men seemingly shooting out into an unseen crowd was part of a local news segment, in which a white female reporter chased after looters trying to interview them at a strip mall of Korean businesses, now called the "Rodeo Galleria." At one point, she chases a Latino man with a large cardboard box of looted goods:

> Reporter: What did you get?
> Looter: Shoes
> R: Shoes?
> L: Yeah.
> R: Where do you live?
> L: Right here.
> R: Why did you do this?
> L: I don't know. Because it's free. (He turns to leave, struggling with the size and weight of the box)
> R: Because it's free?
> L: Yeah.
> R: Don't you know it's wrong?
> L: Nah. (Starts to walk away)
> R: You don't care? (Starts to walk with him)
> L: I don't care.
> R: Why not?
> L: Because I don't
> R: Why not? You're stealing things.
> L: Yeah I know.
> R: Why don't you care?

L: I don't because everyone is getting it.
R: Because everyone else is doing it?
L: Yeah.

The same reporter then runs after another looter, a female, presumably Latino, who was holding a stack of shoeboxes and running away:

Reporter: Talk to me. What are you doing?
Looter 2: (Running away) I don't know.
R: Are you embarrassed?
L2: (Exclamation sound)
R: Don't you know this is illegal? (Shoving the microphone into the woman's face)
L2: No. No! (Diverts around the reporter)

They contrasted this with an interview of a frail elderly woman, presumably white, who looked upset, while the reporter put a consoling hand on her shoulder.

Elderly woman: It's the United States! How come they let that happen to the place? Why didn't they guard? No one [unintelligible] food. I, I, I got [unintelligible] shopping. I don't have any food in the house (sob).

During another part of the segment, she describes the looting inside of the stores:

Reporter: You know it's party time. These people are smiling; as you heard they don't care. They know it's illegal. They don't care. But I'll tell you what happened moments later; the Korean merchants and storeowners who own that shopping complex they, they were talking to me for a moment; they said they were fed up they walked away next thing I knew they walked out of their stores three of them were holding guns and they just started firing at everybody and anybody.

While referring to the predominantly Latino looters as "these people," she insinuates that they are willingly, even giddily, participating in illegal activities. She then discusses how the Korean merchants and storeowners "inexplicably" began firing guns into an unseen crowd.

Reporter: We were showing some of this to you live earlier, then what happens. Apparently a car full of some young black kids pulled up the other side and they started shooting back. […] They notice what was going on and they started shooting back and we were right in the middle of it. It all happened so quickly that to tell you the truth that I thought they were blanks at first. I couldn't believe that these guys had actually pulled out loaded guns. But they were. There were bullets flying all over. And here and here you can see this is where they see the cars pull up and they start to shoot back. And they start to take cover realizing I think what they had started there. But there was just a simmering

> point and they just they boiled over. And I saw it happen I was talking to the gentleman I saw it in his eyes. He ran away from me. I thought he was going to get me his business card, I had asked for an interview. Next thing I knew he came out with those guns. We got out of there as fast as we could. Which wasn't fast enough. But we were okay. No body no body in our crew got hurt.

This segment embodies the way that the event was framed in much of the mainstream media, showing people of color as foreigners, losing control, striking fear into rest of (white) America. The phrase, "[T]hey start to take cover realizing I think what they had started there," paradoxically signifies the way in which the mainstream media simultaneously showed its blindness and produced a specific notion of a Korean-black conflict, without addressing the political and economic inequalities and injustices by the overarching racialized ideology of the United States, ironically often perpetuated by the narratives the media itself created.

Though local Korean news outlets (some published in English) were well known to the Korean and Korean American communities, it was difficult to bridge their perspectives into the mainstream media. Lacking Korean and Korean Americans in key positions in the mainstream inevitably shaped how the communities would be constructed for the general American viewers in not only Los Angeles, and California, but nationally.

> [Viewers are] not used to seeing a face like ours, like mine, being able to speak the way I speak. It's a disconnect for them. [….] I think that mainstream America just wasn't ready to hear a lot of the voices that came forward. And yet, these voices speak English perfectly well. Marcia Choo is very eloquent. Bong Hwan Kim very eloquent. TS Chung has an accent, but he went to Harvard and he's very understandable. You got, you know, people who were willing and knowledgeable about what was happening. Now the first generation, of course, it's going to be harder to understand. They might struggle to try to speak in a language that the audience understands, but maybe they should speak in Korean and let subtitles, let the station do the work and subtitle what they had to say, so they don't sound like they're somebody we shouldn't listen to because they can't speak properly, right? (Angela Oh, from *Vincent Who?* 2009)

Oh's observation is supported partly by what we saw in the segment above. Inexplicably, although the reporter claimed that she spoke with three business owners when they went for their

guns, none of them was on camera, whereas looters were actually interviewed in the middle of their getaway after stealing from a store. The group of "some young black kids," was not interviewed, though their communities, like the Korean and Korean American communities, were highlighted as the groups heavily involved in the upheaval, the Rodney King incident forgotten, albeit for a moment. These types of coverage rendered the Korean and Korean American communities, as well as black communities, visible and invisible at the same time.

Korean media (in Korea) began to report on what was happening in Los Angeles. The images of burning stores and distraught Koreans were transmitted across to the Pacific, as Korean papers with branches in Los Angeles, such as *Central Daily* (중앙일보) began to print what was being printed stateside. This then in turn led to aid efforts by Koreans to send overseas, for the Korean and Korean American communities affected by the upheaval. Sa-I-Gu became a moment when Koreatown had to symbolically and literally rise out of the ashes, and in turn, the Korean and Korean American communities had gained a new perspective on their precarious positions as transnational and immigrant communities.

Impact on Korean and Korean American communities

Sa-I-Gu is considered a turning point in the development of Korean and Korean American political consciousness in the United States. Whether that it was part of an Asian American political consciousness is something often debated, though it is certainly part of its history. The outcomes of these events were different from the results of the murder of Vincent Chin just ten years prior, whose death, and subsequent following trials of the white men involved showed and incentivized an activism centered on a new political identity of Asian Americans. When a group of Korean American college students attempted to protest in front of City Hall in

May of 1992, demanding that their voices as citizens of the United States be heard, their rally was stopped by the Los Angeles Police Department and moved to an empty lot, figuratively and physically rendering them invisible, silenced. As Angela Oh, one of the notably visible[31] figures during Sa-I-Gu, noted in an interview for the documentary *Vincent Who?* (2009):

> But initially, it was pretty clear that Koreans were by themselves, you know? Other Asian ethnicities did not want to be identified as ethnic Korean because the stereotype was so negative about us, right? We were viewed as greedy, rude, insensitive, insular, you know those were the things. Nobody wrote stories about, you know, the storeowners who would deliver groceries to homebound customers from the neighborhood; nobody wrote stories about storeowners who would have kids come in and they would tutor them, right? School mathematics, or like that. Nobody talked about storeowners who would give credit to their customers because they knew some of the customers had paydays that sometimes didn't come through on time. Those stories were completely ignored. And then post-riot, nobody talked about the people who committed suicide, the mental health breakdowns, the kids who had to drop out of school after working so hard to get into some really fine university because father killed himself. I had all of those people come through my life, in that time period. Nobody talked about the biracial, already biracial Afro-Asian kids who, mom is Korean, dad is African-American, whose homes were torn apart during that time. I met those kids, right? Rejected by the Korean community, and embraced more by the African American community, frankly (Angela Oh, from *Vincent Who?* 2009).

Sa-I-Gu did change the way in which the Korean communities saw themselves in the United States: they were not separate from the rest of the communities of color, and they could not live without contending with the everyday life of being a person of color in Los Angele. Moreover, they had to build political capital in the United States, as they realized that they needed to find a voice in the political landscape. It was a moment of shift in the way that Korean transnational and immigrant communities began to build and acknowledge their multiplied identities not only as Korean and transnational, but also Korean American, who then could have and must develop their political voice in the transnational urban spaces they occupy.

[31] This was due to her fluency in Korean as well as her status as a lawyer.

LETHARGIC RECOVERIES

Nearly a quarter of a century later, the affected areas have not fully recovered or developed in Los Angeles, including South Central and Koreatown. The immediate aftermath of Sa-I-Gu that affected the Korean communities came in multiple forms. One of the issues was that many storeowners did not have insurance for their inventory. While for some, it could be considered a choice, there were claims that the insurance companies resisted insuring the stores in areas that were in South Central (where many Korean immigrants had their businesses), ultimately making it difficult to find affordable rates (5:00-5:20 Track 3 Radio Korea). Another difficulty for many of the small convenience and liquor stores came through the measures that the City Council and the Mayor voted to integrate into business practices in the city. One of the main forms of businesses that Korean immigrants built in South Central were convenience and liquor stores; in such stores, in which liquor sales dominated, and prices of everyday items such as groceries or toiletries were higher priced than the larger markets. As many of these areas could be considered food deserts, the communities often lacked other avenues to purchase these items. Because of the reliance on the liquor sales for revenue, many of these stores were seen to be taking advantage of disenfranchised communities by perpetuating usages of alcohol and making it difficult to buy food at an affordable price. Additionally, because Korean and Korean Americans owned many of these stores in the blighted, disenfranchised neighborhood, it was thought that Korean businesses were heavily targeted in and outside of Koreatown. In order to provide a solution to "improve" these areas, the City Council passed a measure that limited the re-allocation of liquor licenses for these areas, in order to limit alcohol sales. This meant that the looted convenience and liquor stores would be unable to reopen or sustain their business without the revenue of sales that had driven their businesses. Particularly, Korean and Korean American

business owners in these areas felt twice victimized by the city that failed to protect their livelihood, and in fact had made it impossible to rebuild.

In terms of rebuilding Koreatown itself, which would mean finding ways to support workers and storeowners who lost their lifelines, it became a pivotal moment in several ways. As Abelmann and Lie (2009) noted,

> A fundamental lesson of the L.A. Riots for many Korean Americans was the need to shift their focus from South Korea to the United States. The transitions from 'Korean Korean' to 'Korean American' implies not only a generational transfer of power but new articulations of the South Korean-U.S. relationship" (P. 185).

This sentiment was reflected in many of my respondents' experiences, as they noted that they became politically aware and their political identities were shaped in Sa-I-Gu's aftermath. Still, this event highlighted the transnational existences of the area and its communities, as donations from South Korea and the United States began to pour in, as Richard Choi and Kee-Whan Ha noted it, respectively, in interviews to KoreaAm Magazine (2012),

> From the second night, we had said we were raising funds for the victims. What came in to us was $3 million. People sending $10, $100, $5. We gathered that, and it was more than $3 million. And from the *Korea Times* and from South Korea, they raised another $3 million. So a total of about $6 million came together.
>
> Any victim register[ed] at Radio Korea [was] entitled to have [the] same money. So we give $500, $3000, whatever. I think about 3000 registered as victims. So we give. All the money [was] gone that way.

As Korean and Korean American business owners began seeking ways to receive monetary aid through these donations, what was then known as the Korean Immigrant Workers Advocate (KIWA), which had begun just two months prior to the upheaval, became involved, helping displaced Korean and Korean American workers access the same aid as business owners. They also worked for Latino workers who were displaced by the upheaval as well, and won "some measure of restitution for dozens of Korean and Latino workers in" Koreatown

(kiwa.org/history). According to Danny Park, co-founder of KIWA, the name change to Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance came about because "half of our work, if not more, was involved organizing Latino workers," and that "'Korean Immigrant [Workers Advocate]' didn't make sense, so we changed our name" (Interview Recording 70. 2012). It, like the Koreatown Youth Community Center (KYCC), formerly Korean Youth Center (KYC), changed its name wanting to serve all people of Koreatown, recognizing the need to organizing and working together across racial and ethnic lines, while also acknowledging the political value of rooting themselves, as Korean Americans and Koreatown, in the City discourse as more than a Korean-serving organization. The space began to recognize better the multiethnic communities of Koreatown. As Park and Kim (2008:134) noted,

> Increasing number of nouveau-riche South Koreans, concerned about economic instability and populism since the 1997 financial crisis […], invested in California businesses and real estate. In addition, linguistic and cultural affinity, together with spectacular property appreciation in Southern California, has positioned Koreatown as a prime destination for South Korean investors.

Since the upheaval, Koreatown's "rebirth," so to speak, has been affected by South Korean transnational investment, a shift in policies that removed the cap on the amount of individual investment (since 2009), and more recently, an amalgamation[32] of Hallyu[33] (한류), "hipsters" searching for authentic experiences, and fetishization of ethnic foods and other consumable materials, which have brought on a different production of spaces in Koreatown. In many ways, the current location of Koreatown was concretized by its destruction. It placed Koreatown in the history and consciousness of Los Angeles. It also ingrained the Korean and Korean American community into the fabric of Los Angeles narratives.

[32] In a later chapter, I will explore the production of consumable spaces.
[33] This references the "Korean wave" which refers to an increase of popularity in South Korean culture, initially heavily centering on K-pop and films.

CONCLUSION

In the context of the theoretical frames discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter has shown the dialectical relationship between transnational activities and spatial identities through several examples. The transnational movements and moments highlighted have constructed the Korean, Korean American, and Koreatown communities. These are important facets of the reverberations of history that affect the area and its communities continuously. From transnational political activists and activism, to the turning point of Sa-I-Gu, Koreatown has been seeped in transnational processes in multiple forms over multiple eras. I also argued that these transnational moments and movements affected Koreatown's past and present constructions of the space and its spatial identities, underlining the continuous transnational moments that affected the Korean and Korean American communities as well as Koreatown itself. This narrative began with an examination of the transnational history of Korean migration to Hawaii and the United States and ended with the connection to transnational political activities that still shape the communities today. Moreover, I examined the development of "Old Koreatowns" and the implications of Sa-I-Gu, both pivotal in the development of the Koreatown and the Korean and Korean American communities' political awakening. The purpose of this chapter was to show how the transnational historical moments and movements that continue to have shaped Koreatown, which continues to grow with additional layers of transnationality while contending with the power struggle of being a transnational and immigrant community within a city where they are rendered visible and invisible by those more powerful.

CHAPTER 4: VISUALITY IN THE CITY

In the previous chapter, I discussed how historical, transnational movements and moments have constructed Koreatown and how, in turn, the constructed urban space shapes the way transnationality is exercised by the Korean and Korean American communities through examples of transnational political activities. It is important to keep in mind the jarring shift from Korean to Korean American, from Korean Town to Koreatown experienced because of these moments. As such, a claim emerges about Koreatown from the harnessing of Mirzoeff's (2011) concepts of visuality and countervisuality. These concepts are used to analyze the power dynamics within the transnational urban spaces of Koreatown. This chapter focuses on analyzing how visuality affects Koreatown through networks of power. This occurs through authority utilizing Koreatown as political capital, which shapes the borders of Koreatown.

Visuality is a weapon for authority, through which the authority constructs, asserts, legitimizes, and perpetuates power to control visual social processes and spaces over the less powerful. Visuality is operated through classifying those who do not have power by naming, categorizing, and defining. Then the authority further separates the classified into groups, constructing legitimized segregations, which prevents those without power from unifying to develop, wield, or assert their countervisuality—right to look. The modalities of visuality naturalize/legitimize an *a priori* aesthetic of the authority's power (Mirzoeff 2011:3), in turn perpetuating and reaffirming the construction of the authority's power. The networks of power of Koreatown identified through the study are very much reflective of the assertion of visuality on Koreatown, in which the authority of power wielding visuality is the city elected offices, though the networks of power are also comprised of community-oriented organizations, and domestic

and transnational investors.

Koreatown has many layers of communities and processes that may never intersect. At the very least, they may not even notice each other. There are places unknown to their residents; events held in the area may go unnoticed. Some groups will come and go, like the ebbs and flows of a tide. Here, through the most recent remapping of Koreatown through the 2009 neighborhood boundary formalization and the 2011 city redistricting, I examine the tensions found between this space, as it has been constructed, and the networks of various powers structures and agencies that subsequently shaped redevelopments of the area through the narratives of the participants. These visualizations of Koreatown and processes of development of these maps exemplify what Mirzoeff (2011) referred to as the modalities of visuality, which classifies Others in order to separate into groups as a means of social organization, segregating to prevent unification because that would lead to development of political subjects. He also contends that the authority has the power to render these divisions and injustices as legitimate and self-reaffirming, so that their construction of reality gains permanence and continual power.

The various networks of Koreatown have their own narratives. For example, recent developments in Koreatown could be framed directly as relating to the young, generally the 1.5 and 2nd generations of Koreans and Korean Americans, the new builders of Koreatown. Such as many of my respondents, these generations were children to young adults during Sa-I-Gu, a time when there was an awakening of their racial and political identities. There has been a strong connection (e.g., Chung 2008; Park 2012; Park and Lee 2009) between movements of transnational capital from South Korea to the development of Koreatown, some of which I discussed in the last chapter. While the narratives concerning Koreatown's communities in the context of immigrant businesses or movements of transnational capital investment are prominent,

another narrative emerged in this study. This narrative involved people inside and outside the recognized structures of power in the city, including its governance, struggling over bringing legitimacy and highlighting—while constructing—value to Koreatown. Such a narrative portrays a shift that simultaneously includes and ignores the common focus on entrepreneurship, church networks, or transnational capital flow. This chapter will show the impact of visuality on Koreatown by first identifying the networks of power, then utilize the development of The Vermont and Catalina on 8th, boundary re-constructions through neighborhood formalization process, and the 2011-2012 city redistricting process as examples of how Koreatown has been harnessed as political capital for the powerful and how this in turn sustains and supports the legitimacy of their authority as they turn political capital into political gains, regardless of the demands Koreatown communities have voiced.

NETWORKS OF POWER

In order to understand the struggles for power and visibility in Koreatown, I broadly group the actors in the networks highlighted in the narratives emerging from my respondents and my observations. The networks comprise "city-governing bodies," "community-rented organizations" that may have a relationship with the city, "domestic and transnational investors," and the "stakeholders" who affect the way Koreatown is constructed, although they do not have the same level of power or are similarly valued. They have played roles in how Koreatown has formed and continue to change. It is important to understand the varying part of the networks that operate within Koreatown and the city to understand the contexts in which the visualizations and consumptions of Koreatown are controlled, constructed, and implemented, depending on the tension between the communities of Koreatown and the City.

The City-Elected Offices

The elected offices of the City of Los Angeles are non-partisan, composed of the mayor, the city council, the city attorney, and the controller. The city attorney works as the legal advisor to the city, and the controller, in essence, is the city's accountant. The Mayor is the "management authority [and] chief executive officer" (Sonnenshein 2006:42), who, among other powers, has the ability to appoint and remove staff, heads of departments, and commissioners, of which there are hundreds, serving 5-year terms. The mayor also has the power to make "key appointments, [present] budget, and […] veto legislation" (Sonnenshein 2006:43). However, comparatively, the mayor of Los Angeles has less formal authority than those of other large cities. For example, the New York City mayor has more power than its city council, whereas in Chicago, the mayor has wider reaching "formal authority over the city government and the schools" (Sonnenshein 2006:43). This becomes important to note when considering the scale and amount of power of the city council, which comprises 15 elected members, each of whom represents a district. Each term lasts four years, with a three-term maximum. The city council is the "legislative authority of the city" (Sonnenshein 2006), although, prior to 2000, the council had been designated as the "governing body" of the city. The charter reform in 2000 removed that label, and the charter no longer states whether the mayor or the city council is the governing body. The council has its own leaders that itself elects: the council president and the president pro tempore (Sonnenshein 2006). Due to the small size of the city council relative to such a large city, (Los Angeles is the second-largest city in the United States) it ranks as one of the most powerful city councils among big cities that have a mayor-council system. By comparison, New York City, the largest city in the United States, has 51 members, and Chicago has 50 members in its city council. The Los Angeles City Council has considerable sway over city politics, especially regarding their own

districts. Of importance to this study, until 2015, over the span of 22 years, there had been only one other Asian American city councilmember, Mike Woo, whose term ended in 1992 when he opted to campaign for the mayoral seat and lost.

Table 3. List of Los Angeles City Councilmember changes from 2012, 2013, and 2015.

District	2012	2013	2015
1	Ed Reyes**	Gil Cedillo	Gil Cedillo
2	Paul Krekorian	Paul Krekorian	Paul Krekorian
3	Dennis Zine	Bob Blumenfield	Bob Blumenfield
4	Tom LaBonge	Tom LaBonge	David Ryu
5	Paul Koretz	Paul Koretz	Paul Koretz
6	Tony Cardenas	Nury Martinez	Nury Martinez
7	Richard Alacón	Felipe Fuentes	Felipe Fuentes
8	Bernard Parks	Bernard Parks	Marqueece Harris-Dawson
9	Jan Perry	Curren Price	Curren Price
10	Herb Wesson*	Herb Wesson*	Herb Wesson*
11	Bil Rosendahl	Mike Bonin	Mike Bonin
12	Mitchell Englander	Mitchell Englander**	Mitchell Englander**
13	Eric Garcetti	Mitch O'Farrell	Mitch O'Farrell
14	José Huizar	José Huizar	José Huizar
15	Joe Buscaino	Joe Buscaino	Joe Buscaino

Key: * President ** President pro tempore. [34]

At the time of my fieldwork, the city council was going through a transition because of the 2013 elections (only certain seats are up for election cycles). According to Table 1, the highlighted names indicate the council districts (CD) that claimed Koreatown. They play an especially important role in affecting the neighborhoods, as well as in establishing legislation that ultimately legitimize their own power. Though the city councilmembers are expected to act on behalf of their respective regions and, subsequently, the regions' stakeholders, notable tensions exist between the Councilmembers and their stakeholders, especially in Koreatown in the aftermath of Sa-I-Gu. It was nearly impossible to get unified aid from the Councilmembers responsible for Koreatown (Redistricting Report 2002). This lack of response not only

[34] There was no change in 2014.

highlighted a broken system, but also revealed that, when stakeholders were comprised largely of transnational and heavily immigrant populations who were ineligible to vote, they were ignored, regardless of the extent of damage to the area. The direct and indirect influence of the city council and other elected officials was especially evident during the redistricting process, discussed later in this chapter. Seen in Table 1, Koreatown was split amongst four different CDs in 2012, which had been the case during Sa-I-Gu in 1992, as well as 2002. After the 2012 redistricting, it was split amongst three districts, remaining so at least until after the 2020 United States Census.

The power that the elected offices have in Los Angeles is disproportionately large compared to the size of the city as well as the number of other organizations, agencies, and stakeholders that also can affect the various spaces. The elected offices, as it will be shown later in this chapter, can shape Koreatown by treating Koreatown as their own political capital, despite other organizations and agencies working to support transnational and immigrant communities in Koreatown and build those communities' political voice, hence their rights to be see and be seen. The elected offices can also control or work with community-related organizations and agencies, though there are noted tensions between the city elected offices, various governmental agencies, and community-related organizations, who work more directly with the specific neighborhoods and communities.

Community-Related Organizations and Agencies

While there are a plethora of organizations and agencies in Los Angeles that could fall under the community-related organizations categorization, six organizations will be highlighted due to their involvement in affecting the construction and changes in Koreatown. Even though

some of these agencies are related to city governance (e.g., CRA or neighborhood council), their positionality can be differentiated from the elected offices mentioned above. These organizations also cooperated on certain projects, as well as sometimes willing to form partnerships (e.g., during redistricting).

Pre-2012 Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). The CRA "was a state agency, authorized and governed by state law and directed to a large extent by the mayor and the city council" (Sonnenshein 2006:132). Established in 1948 by the Los Angeles City Council, it was a quasi-state entity, with a purpose of "eliminating blight and promoting economic revitalization within designated project areas" (CRA/LA 2011:25) all over the state. The agency was dissolved in 2012 as part of the budget cuts enacted by Governor Jerry Brown, although it was succeeded by CRA/LA (CRA of Los Angeles) as a Designated Local Authority (DLA) with an oversight board. It had a commission of seven members, all appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city council (Sonnenshein 2006:132). The CRA's finances depended on "tax increment financing" (*ibid.)*, which meant that, when the property value of a designated blight area significantly increased due to a CRA investment in its redevelopment, it increased the property tax assessment. "[T]he additional property taxes collected" subsequently are the tax increment funds (*ibid.)* that fed back into the program and the area. Projects worked on through CRA for Koreatown included affordable housing loans, loans to developers, public improvement projects like parks, streetscape programs, and land acquisition. One respondent stated that it had "something called Oversight Ordinance over it so [as] a quasi-state city entity […] the city councilmembers ha[d] a huge influence in the [CRA's employees'] day-to-day work life." Koreatown officially became the "Wilshire Center Koreatown Recovery Redevelopment Project

Area" in 1995,[35] about one-and-a-half years after Sa-I-Gu. Through this program, one of the most visible changes in Koreatown came in two forms: the Olympic Boulevard streetscape program and the translation of restaurant menus into English. CRA was a governmental agency, though ultimately, it operated by serving and working with the communities more directly than those of the city elected officials, when permitted to do so by the elected officials.

The Korean American Coalition - Los Angeles (KAC). The KAC is an example of one of the many non-profit community organizations that operate in Koreatown. The Los Angeles chapter began in 1983, working to advocate "for the interests of the 1.8 million strong Korean American community" (kacla.org). It serves a myriad of interests within or on behalf of the Korean and Korean American communities, ranging from local issues relating to civic and civil rights, as well as transnational social issues, as represented by their Topple Hunger in North Korea (THINK) program.[36] It was also heavily involved in the 2009 neighborhood boundary formalization and the 2011-2012 redistricting. At the time, Grace Yoo was the Executive Director until she ran a campaign in 2015 to unseat Herb Wesson, the incumbent of CD 10 and the city council president. At the time of fieldwork, it was involved in lawsuit relating to the 2011-2012 city redistricting, drawing kudos and ire from the Korean and Korean American communities, by people who wanted to fight the city versus those who wanted to not get involved in a tense arbitration battle with the city. While KAC serves primarily as an interest group, there are other organizations whose work affects Koreatown and its various communities in a different way.

[35] It seems that there was a "Preliminary Plan formulated and adopted by the Planning Commission of the City […] on February 17, 1994" ("Redevelopment Plan for the Wilshire Center/Koreatown Recovery Redevelopment Project" 1995).
[36] This program began in 2008.

The Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA). KIWA, founded in February of 1992, just two months prior to Sa-I-Gu, was originally called "Korean Immigrant Workers Advocate." Recognizing that more than half of the cases the organization was advocating were not for Korean workers, but Latino workers, they changed their name to "Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance." During Sa-I-Gu, the then nascent organization set the tone of its organization; as mentioned in previous chapters, when the $6 million in aid money was collected, KIWA stepped in to ensure that displaced Korean and Latino workers got access to the funds as well as the business owners. Another important outcome that KIWA has had is in organizing Koreatown workers, from supermarkets to restaurants, much to the chagrin of Korean and Korean American business owners in the late 1990s and early 2000s. While they continue their efforts in finding justice for mistreated and unjustly treated workers, as well as successfully campaigning to raise the minimum wage to $15, according to Danny Park, co-founder of the organization, one of its greatest achievements is in advocating for changes in unfair and even exploitative labor practices for Korean and Latino workers. The organization, currently with Alexandra Suh as its Executive Director, continues to work as the voice of the disenfranchised workers, even beyond the Koreatown borders.

Korean American Democratic Committee (KADC) and My One Vote (MOV). KADC was founded in 1992, a few months after Sa-I-Gu, as a political action committee (PAC), and primarily comprising Korean Americans, with the exception of an advisory board member, Richard Macias, a long-standing member and advisor for KADC for at least a decade due to his extensive political experience. Because the KADC board of directors tends to have a high turnover rate, it is generally filled with Korean Americans, mostly men between the ages of late

20s and 40s. Its mission is "to promote the political empowerment of the Korean American community through advocacy, education, and civic participation in the spirit of Democratic Party principles" (kadems.org). In the monthly meetings I was invited to attend, I was also able to meet members of MOV, an organization co-founded by Danny Park (also a co-founder of KIWA) to increase voting participation and raise political awareness in the Korean American communities.

Koreatown Youth and Community Center (KYCC). A powerhouse non-profit organization, this center depends on the support of the city and its elected officials to fund their projects, though they do have a strong community support. Established in 1975 as the Korean Youth Center (KYC), it provided "after school and summer programs for recently immigrated Korean youth, who were struggling with poverty and language barriers" (kyccla.org). After Sa-I-Gu, its members found a broader direction, wanting to serve the various ethnic groups in Koreatown, changing its name to "Korean Youth and Community Center." In 2004, it changed its name to the "Koreatown Youth and Community Center" and expanded its scope, re-emphasizing the commitment to crossing ethnic boundaries to provide for the Koreatown community as a whole. It still serves mostly "first generation immigrants and their children from Asia and Latin America" (kyccla.org), though they have done other projects that help homeless families, regardless of ethnic backgrounds, such as the Menlo Family Apartments, a community housing project.

Wilshire Center Koreatown Neighborhood Council (WCKNC). According to R. J. Sonnenshein (2006), "Compared to cities with strong party organizations and a long tradition of civic involvement, Los Angeles can seem politically disconnected. Levels of political activity are

relatively low" (p. 156). In order to address this issue, the city established the neighborhood council system: "The 2000 charter sought to improve opportunities for participation in Los Angeles by creating neighborhood councils and area planning commissions. Hopefully, these changes will result in a more active populace and greater public input into City Hall" (*ibid.*). Neighborhood councils were meant to operate more as grassroots organizations.

Established in 2003, WCKNC is part of the current 95 neighborhood council system. Like other neighborhood councils, WCKNC plays an advisory role in representing the needs of the community, lacking any authoritative power. The city funds the organization with an annual budget of about $38,000. Still, one of the most important and powerful aspects of neighborhood councils is the definition of stakeholders who can vote in its elections, which are separate from city elections. This is possible because of the way the concept of "stakeholder" or "stakeholdership" is defined. Stakeholders are defined as individuals who "live, work, or own property in the neighborhood and also […] those who declare a stake in the neighborhood and affirm the factual basis for it" (WCKNC By-laws [2003] 2012:11), which expands the eligibility of who is able to vote in its elections. Additionally, the requirements to vote are an age minimum (18 years old or older), verifiable stakeholder status by "providing acceptable documentation" or by "declaring a stake (or interest) in the neighborhood and providing documentation supporting that declaration" (*ibid.*).

These flexible definitions of stakeholderships, along with holding how these elections are held separately from city elections, allow different eligibility requirements. According to an email I received from one of my respondents, a WCKNC member, encouraging people to vote for the neighborhood council elections, a "Citizenship/Green Card is not required, anyone can vote (even exchange student or undocumented)" (Personal communication 2013). This means

that, for transnational, heavily immigrant communities such as the ones in Koreatown, where 48% are ineligible to vote in city elections, they would be able to vote for neighborhood council representatives who could take their concerns to the city council with the weight of a city-legitimized organization. This is perhaps one of the very few ways stakeholders without American citizenship may participate in governance, regardless of the limited capacity of the neighborhood council. For example, during the redistricting, WCKNC representatives also attended and spoke at the public hearings regarding the remapping, voicing the concerns of the stakeholders of Koreatown. However, there is a serious lack of participation by the stakeholders, which creates separate issues explored in later in this chapter. In addition to WCKNC and other community-related organizations mentioned, networks of power also include domestic and international investors, which can complicate stakeholdership because of certain investors who are able to exert more influence through financial means.

Domestic and International Investment

The businesses in Koreatown range from the service-oriented sector (restaurants, noraebangs, bars, cafes, and so on) to the real estate sector. The service sector has been growing as Koreatown has become more popular amongst non-Koreans, buttressed partially by the emergence of Hallyu,[37] but also by non-Koreans, "foodies" and "hipsters" who fetishize and search for consumable ethnic authenticity, as well as young, often college students, seeking cheaper rent. In terms of real estate, one respondent joked that three entities owned Koreatown: "Dr. Lee," "Dr. Ha," and the rest by a smattering of investors. The respondent was referring to David Lee, Kee-Hwan Ha, and others such as Donald Sterling.

[37] Hallyu refers to 한류 or the Korean Wave, which generally refers to transnational flows of K-pop, films, and shows. This will be discussed in a later chapter.

These investors are examples of a specific realm of power of real estate developers in Koreatown. They are all notable, though some divisive, figures in Koreatown. David Lee, owner of Jamison Services, owns the largest amount[38] of commercial real estate property in Koreatown as well as in Los Angeles County. Several respondents sometimes spoke of David Lee in hushed tones. They spoke of an opportunistic windfall, of Lee as buying buildings in Koreatown in the aftermath of Sa-I-Gu as well as the 1994 earthquake, when "[i]nsurance companies were selling half-empty buildings at knockdown prices, seeing no way the economy would revive" (Flanigan 2005). Still, to many, he is considered a savvy investor, and due to his successes, he is well respected in the Korean and Korean American communities. Kee-Hwan Ha has a relatively longer and deeper root in the history in Koreatown, as he had owned Hannam Chain stores since 1988, one of the core Korean supermarkets in Koreatown. He chose to stay after Sa-I-Gu, when he had taken up arms to protect his property during the upheaval. Ha had also been involved in the WCKNC, and was a president of WCKNC. He also owns other properties, such as the Chapman Plaza, and recently sold Wilshire Galleria, a Korean-targeted shopping mall, which had opened after Sa-I-Gu. Donald Sterling, the former owner of the Los Angeles Clippers, holds many residential properties in Koreatown. He lost his ownership to the basketball team because of racist remarks he made in 2014, but had made similar comments in 2003, including "[Koreans] will live in whatever conditions he gives them and still pay the rent without complaint"; "black people smell and attract vermin"; and "Hispanics just smoke and hang around the building" (Fenno 2014). This sentiment may explain why he preferred Koreans as tenants in

[38] According to a respondent who also works for a commercial real estate firm, this is not based on parcels of land, but rather square footage, meaning that the measurement is based on the accumulation of each building. Because Jamison Services owns the tallest building as well as other high-rise commercial properties in Koreatown, it is unsurprising that he and his company are considered to own the largest amount of real estate.

Koreatown, and was against renting to Hispanics and blacks in Koreatown as well as his many other holdings in Los Angeles. These investors along with other developers represent a source of tension in the struggles to shape Koreatown. They promote interests that may not be beneficial for the Koreatown communities, as their projects[39] can affect housing and rental prices which has and can continue to lead to displacement of the working class families that make up a large portion of the Koreatown population. While these men represent one group of powerful figures in Koreatown, there are also transnational investments from overseas that shape Koreatown.

Figure 10. 2013. Photo by Author. Western Ave. entrance to Madang Mall.

"Much of Koreatown's new growth is credit to South Korean investment, which has flowed [into] the community since the country lifted its foreign investment cap in 2006"

[39] Some of these projects will be discussed later in the chapter.

(Compass Blueprint Case Study 2008:11). In 2010, one estimate indicates there had been almost $1 billion of international investment into Koreatown over 10 years (Park 2012). Transnational investment from Korea has been an undeniable part of Koreatown's growth since 1992. For example, in recent years, CJ Entertainment, a former branch of Samsung and one of the largest conglomerate entities in the Korean entertainment industry, constructed a shopping mall named "Madang" (see Figure 1). The company installed a Korean chain movie theater called CGV, and filled the rest of the mall with Korean chains or brands well known in Korea, such as Daiso, a Japanese chain similar to the concept of the dollar store.

Older "mom and pop" stores or small businesses range from video stores, supermarkets, liquor stores, rice cake stores, restaurants, drinking establishments, comic book reading rooms, clothing stores, bakeries, cafes, hair salons, pharmacies, noraebangs (private rooms for karaoke), and so on. These were the pioneering types of the businesses in Koreatown and still much dominate the majority of percentage of businesses in the area. Though some can no longer be really referred to as "mom and pop" due to their expansion into other cities as franchises or branches, they all play various roles in the economic system within Koreatown, especially with increased consumption of services and products from non-Korean clients, which has also led to an increase in service sector jobs in the area.

Who is in Control?

The different types of domestic and international investments that shape Koreatown are represented at varying scales, from large corporations like CJ Entertainment to real estate and commercial developers to small business owners, there is a range of investments that shape Koreatown in multiple directions. Along with community-oriented organizations, as well as the

elected offices, these groups pursue varying agendas in Koreatown, though their relationships with each other are tangled and inseparable. This is especially highlighted when discussing examples of how networks of power shape Koreatown.

While only certain business owners may have connections to the city council and other elected offices, in Koreatown, it is certain that the real estate entities have lobbying powers of their own, and are among the more powerful groups who may have direct connections to the elected officials through their sizable campaign donations. Community organizations such as the CRA and KYCC, and KIWA's projects are contingent on the city council and other elected offices in one form or another, although the city council, specifically the Councilmembers, seems to have the most influence over how Koreatown, and the rest of the city, gets to change, develop, grow, or decline. These lopsided power relationships over the production of Koreatown have become more evident in the past five years, as seen in luxury multi-use development projects such as The Vermont and Catalina on 8th.

THE VERMONT

On the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Vermont Avenue, near the eastern edges of the Koreatown boundaries, across from a major Metro station (there are a total of three Metro stations for the subway system, which is unusual for any neighborhood to have so many), now sits a mixed-use building. The Vermont contains designated residential and commercial units, comprised of shops on the bottom, 464 units of luxury condominiums above them, and a multi-level parking lot in the back. Known officially as The Vermont, respondents often referred to the development as the Snyder project, a reference to the developer J.H. Snyder Company.

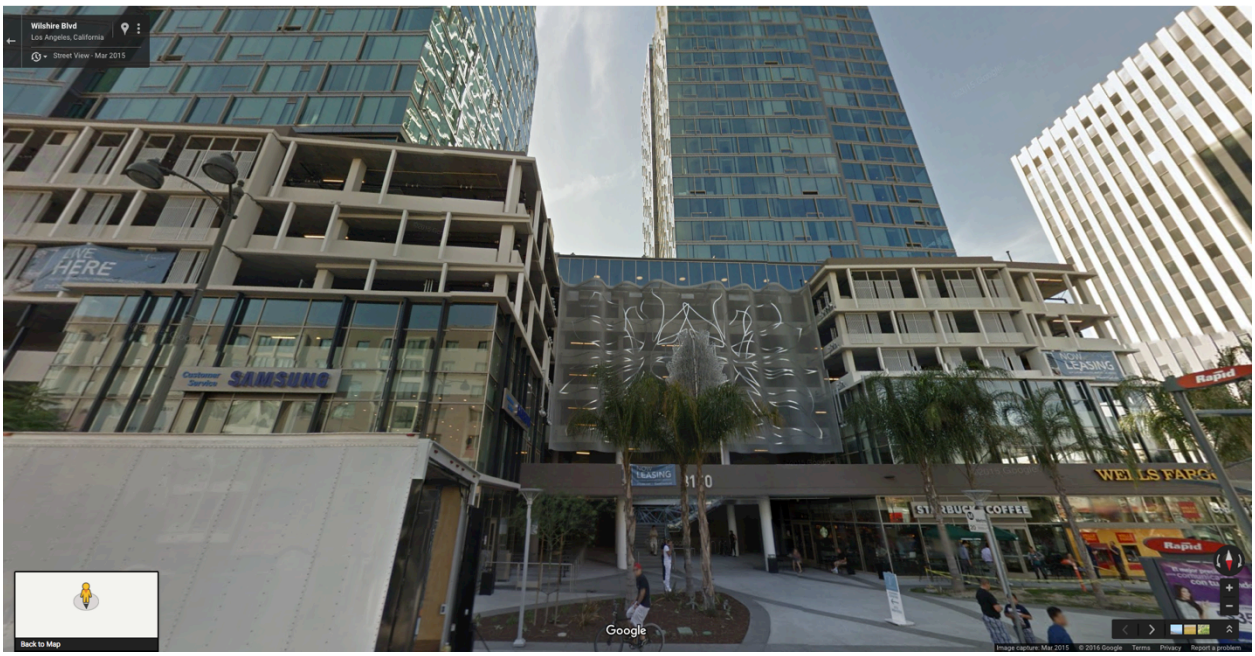


Figure 11. 2015. Screen shot of Google Map Street View of The Vermont.

This development project both symbolizes the various changes in Koreatown and reflects the frustrations and concerns that many of the respondents have expressed in terms of the sense of lack of a voice, power, and visibility for not only the Korean and Korean America community, but also that of the Koreatown.

> [The Snyder Company] will also make a $1 million contribution to a Community Benefit Trust Fund, […] partner […] to build 96 affordable housing units elsewhere in Koreatown. [C]ommunity can also look forward to 77 non-reserved parking spaces in the underground garage as well as 12,000 sq. feet of public open space along Wilshire Blvd (Business Wire 2011).

> It's fantastic to see the community come together for this critical project, which will put people to work and will also provide significant community benefits [….] I applaud the work of J.H. Snyder to bring this important project forward (citing City Councilmember Herb Wesson; Business Wire 2011).

The 77 non-reserved parking spaces are not free, and public parking is a small strip that is about 1/5th of a football field, dotted by trees, plants, and concrete blocks as benches (see Figure 2). According to one of my respondents, the designation of free space helped fulfill the requirements for the development project to receive $17 million from the CRA, even though it did not have

any affordable housing units. In having no affordable housing units (an often-seen requirement for most new residential developments in the area), it is unclear how Snyder received $17 million dollars from Wilshire Center Koreatown's CRA budget. According to some of my respondents, it was directly related to the relationship between Snyder and Councilmember Wesson, as Snyder happens to be one of Councilmember Wesson's major campaign donors.

> It was Herb Wesson all the way. So Snyder is a major donor to Wesson, and there were other projects that needed money, but rammed that through. I mean we got it approved in six months [whereas other projects like the Olympic Blvd. Streetscape Project took six years for approval] which is unbelievable. Our regional administrator and I [were not] allowed to work on it [because they questioned the project and Wesson]; our city attorney didn't like it either (Interview. Participant A 2013).

The 1- to 2-bedroom units are priced between $2300 and $4600. By comparison, the mixed-use building across the street has similar units that are priced between $1800 and $2600. These are extremely high rents for the area, as the median rent in 2011 in Koreatown was $946 (in Los Angeles as a whole, it was $1033). For participants who were aware of these connections between the elected official and the developer could not help but be further frustrated as they knew of other projects that could have better benefited Koreatown and its communities that the very same elected official had rejected.

> At the time it shut down, the CRA had about $80 million dollars to spend just for Wilshire-Center and Koreatown. But the constant struggle was that Herb Wesson did not want to spend the money in Ktown. That's the key. He did not want to spend it. So even when we were getting shut down, and we were trying to spend the money, he put a stop to so many things. Because he wanted to save that money for the merger. [….][The merger] was the first time that the community actually fought against Herb Wesson. Because a couple of years before we were shut down, he had the "brilliant"[40] idea of merging two project areas: Wilshire Center Koreatown and Mid-City. When you merge project areas, their money gets merged. Mid-City had maybe $3 million, Ktown had $80 million. By merging it, all the money could be spent in Mid-City. He had been doing that for [multiple years], but it was always like one project at a time, because that was the process. But by merging it, you don't have to go through like such a[n] arduous process. So when the community figured it out, they came out in force and stalled it, basically shot

[40] The respondent spoke in sarcasm, and I put quotation marks here to emphasize this.

> it down. That's why he was trying to not spend on Ktown money because he was saving it for his pet area [Mid-City] (Interview. Participant A 2013).

The way that Wesson wields power and control over Koreatown as one of its representatives is very much through the processes of city governance. This example shows how the value of Koreatown, from its CRA funds to the shift of the space to becoming accessible to non-Koreans and non-Koreatown stakeholders, is harnessed by Wesson and other elected city officials rather than by the various Korean, Korean American, and Koreatown communities. These authorities with power are reaping the cultivated value of Koreatown, increasing their own political capital by finding ways to benefit their supporters who in return will support them financially and politically. Another more recent project that came to public's attention for similar reasons is the Catalina on 8th development project.

CATALINA ON 8TH PROJECT (CATALINA TOWER)

This development project for luxury mixed-use building has been trying to gain footing in the approval process for almost six years. Originally, it was proposed in 2006 as a plan of a 35-story building with 270 units, which was "roughly double the amount permitted on the property under existing planning rules. [Hakim] sought a zoning change and an amendment to the general plan, which serves as the overall development blueprint for the city" (Zahniser 2015). In 2009, the Los Angeles Planning Commission rejected the project as poor urban design, an assessment then-Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa agreed with (Hamilton 2016).

The developer, Michael Hakim, reduced the project to 27 stories with 269 units, but this was rejected again in 2014 and, once more, a few months later in early 2015, at which point the Commission assessed that such a project was "'wildly inappropriate' for the location," later comparing it to a tumor (Zahniser 2015).

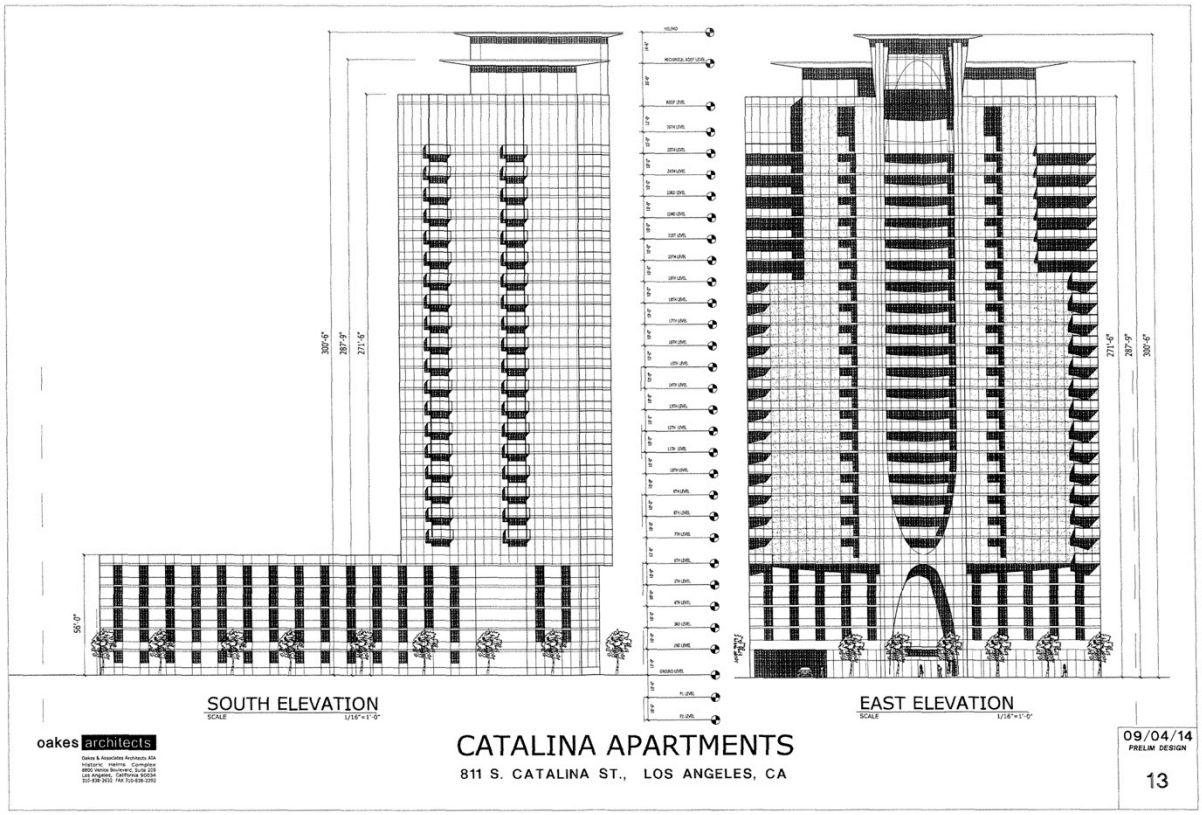


Figure 12. 2015. 15 April. Council File 15-0455. The plans for the Catalina on 8th Project, now called "Catalina Tower" from the March 16 2015 Los Angeles City Planning Commission report regarding the project.

Figure 13. 2015. Screen Shot of Google Map Street View of the location for the Catalina on 8th Project. The site will be on empty lot on the right side, behind Catalina Liquor.

The Commission pointed to several issues, citing that it would be poor urban design and planning to allow this type of project (see Figure 3) to develop on a location (see Figure 4) where it would impede upon the lives of its current residents and other stakeholders by creating traffic congestion, and also among other issues, the building would "loom over its neighbors, casting shadows on surrounding buildings" (*ibid*.), as all of its neighboring buildings are at considerably a lower height (see Figure 4). Even though the current Mayor Eric Garcetti appointed the current Los Angeles Planning Commission, Mayor Garcetti decided to veto his own panel's decision four months later. It was then approved by the city council 11-0. Mayor Garcetti faced criticism that targeted his intent behind vetoing his own commission, as Laura Lake, a member of Fix the City accused, "They're selling the city out cheaply and illegally" (Zahniser 2015).

Fix the City, an advocacy group, filed a lawsuit over this project on April 18, 2016, accusing the mayor and the city council of attempting to go above the law:

> 'The goal of the lawsuit is to once again teach the City Council that laws matter and they're not above the law,' said Laura Lake, secretary of Fix the City. 'The Koreatown community spoke out strongly against this project. The planning Commission spoke out unanimously against this project. And all of that was ignored by the City Council' (Hamilton 2016).

In response to the initial accusations by Fix The City in 2015, Garcetti's spokesman declared, "'we agree with council President Wesson, who represents the area, that this project will add much-needed housing and economic activity to an area well-served by transit infrastructure'" (*ibid.)*. Which brings about a similar story with similar characters being involved. Here, like The Vermont development, the project is not required to have any affordable housing units, and as with Snyder, Hakim has to contribute just $1 million to the affordable housing trust fund, which does not guarantee that those units would be built in Koreatown. Hakim also will be giving $250,000 to fund CD 10's (Wesson's) community projects, which does not guarantee that those

projects will be implemented in Koreatown, and both are fractional amounts compared to the hundreds of millions in costs, revenue, and returns on the development project. Such exchanges of monies and favors frustrate community activists, because, according to one respondent, the money from fundraising (where the city councilmembers are involved) in Koreatown can be utilized by the councilmember to "support" or "donate" to another district's councilmember, so that the receiving councilmember can use it in his or her campaign and promotion, for reciprocal support, which generally tend to mean votes during the city council meetings.

The development of The Vermont and The Catalina Tower reveals the enmeshed, but lopsided, power relationships in Koreatown, where despite what it may portray with the signs and markers in Korean, the power to construct and alter the landscape resides with entities that do not live or use Koreatown in the everyday. The developments also highlight one of the many disjunctures between the city governing entities and the various agencies and individuals working in community-oriented organizations in Koreatown. The ones with the most power, the city council, especially Wesson, seem to be benefiting from the increasing value of the area and harnessing it to exchange for fundraising and other gains to grow their own political capital. The elected offices overrule their own commissions; accept what are, in essence, legalized bribes, because they themselves can dictate policy and the realities of the policy implementations. However, it is not an easy process when the communities start staking a claim of their own, claiming countervisuality, which is the right to be seen, to be accounted for, to take control of the rendering of their neighborhood. The processes of neighborhood boundary formalization and city redistricting show that it can get even more messy and jarring.

NEIGHBORHOOD FORMALIZATION: RESTRUCTURING OF KOREATOWN BOUNDARIES

In 2010, the city council (re)recognized Koreatown with a new set of borders. At the time, Koreatown was so well established already in its current location that it had even created confusion among city councilmembers, with one of them saying, "But Koreatown has always been here. This is Koreatown" (LeBonge 2008). In fact, in 2009, a federal program designated Koreatown a "Preserve America Neighborhood." Additionally, Korean immigrants have played a role in Los Angeles since at least the early 20th century, seen to have been "transforming the city's core […] from a depressed neighborhood into what is today a business and social hub so large and dotted with so many Korean-language signs" (Jang 2009). It has held its moniker from at least the 1970s, when one of the first mentions of Koreatown in the *Los Angeles Times* referred to it as the "new ghetto" of Los Angeles (Boyarsky 1977:I1). It borders, however, came into question when a Bangladeshi community filed papers to have a relatively large section of Koreatown to be designated as Little Bangladesh. This led to the Koreatown community leaders (comprised of Korean individuals) to file their own application for Koreatown boundaries.

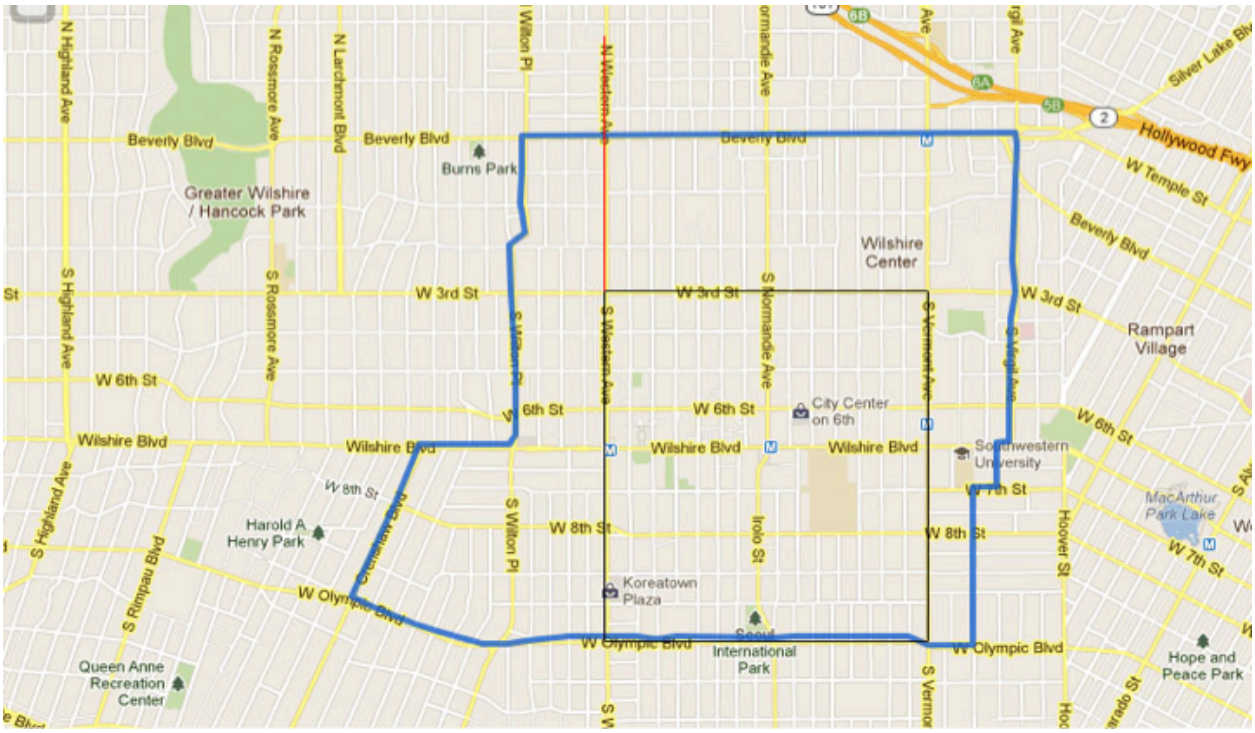


Figure 14. 2013. Drawn by author. The Los Angeles Times recognizes the blue lines as the Koreatown neighborhood boundaries. The black and red lines represent the newly conceived neighborhood boundaries of Koreatown.

The subsequent lines drawn reduced Koreatown to its current size of 2.7 square miles, despite reference to a larger area, and concentrations of local organizations and businesses expanding beyond these new boundaries. As the popularity of Koreatown increases, it is unclear what the ramification will be for these particular businesses. In a way, it all can seem arbitrary when there are at least six other maps utilized by different groups and agencies in Los Angeles, including the Wilshire Center Koreatown Neighborhood Council (see Figure 15 below) and the police departments with differing boundary lines for Koreatown.

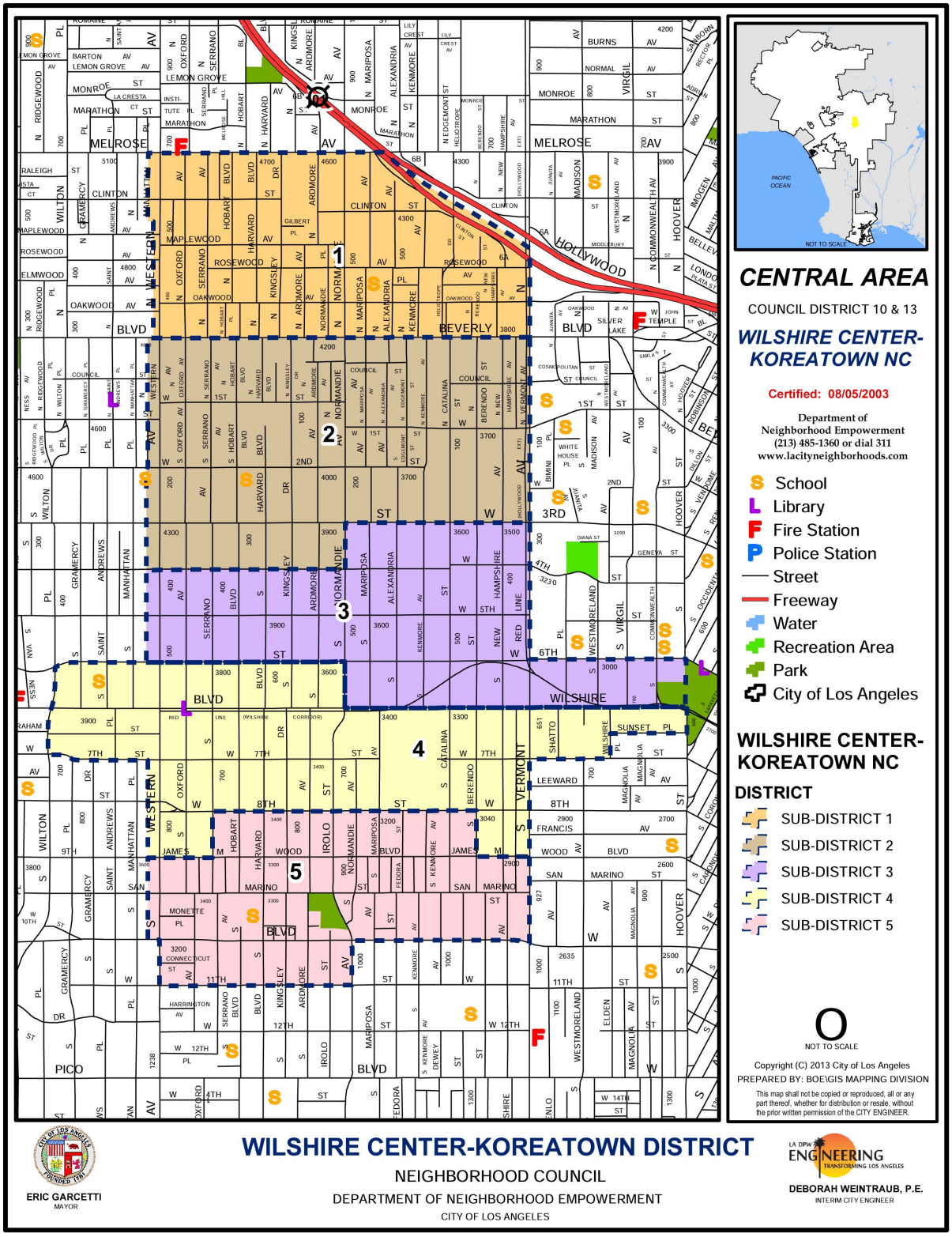


Figure 15. 2013. City of Los Angeles. Map of the Wilshire Center Koreatown Neighborhood Council.

Some of the respondents wondered whether these boundaries were planned to affect the 2011 City Redistricting, among the many indicators of the serious lack of trust between the city officials and the active members of the community, as well as a lack of confidence in the official processes. The formalization also highlighted the tension with the question of whether or not Koreatown has a right to exist, a right to claim, a right to be recognized and, a right to foster its own vision.

Despite its history, Koreatown has often been criticized for proving its right to claim a space called Koreatown. Koreatown is flexibly utilized at the will of whoever wants to use it to their advantage; they are rendered visible, invisible, real, or not real, often by elected officials as well as bordering neighborhood communities. For example, the arguments range between "Well there aren't Latino towns, so why should there be a Koreatown" to "There's a Koreatown so there should be '*x*-town.'" This is a similar argument to buttress partially the relatively recent increase in applications by several Latin American communities (Peruvian, Guatemalan, Venezuelan, Colombian, and Oaxacan) who want to be recognized. "This is us uniting and saying, 'Hey, we contribute. We belong,' Milagros Lizarraga, who is leading the charge for Peru Village, told the *Times*. 'It's time we are all recognized'" (Trinh 2014). There were struggles between the Koreatown and Pico Union that later was renamed the Salvadoran Business Corridor, as Warner (2012) observed:

> The intersection dedication effort that began two years ago started when Salvadoran leaders learned that Korean activists wanted to include areas with Central Americans in the Koreatown boundaries. After hearing about the proposed Koreatown expansion, dozens of Salvadoran community leaders showed up for a City Council committee hearing to protest the Koreatown boundary extension.

Not unlike the initial process that had instigated the application filing for Koreatown, the Salvadoran community of Pico Union felt similarly. The Salvadoran Community Corridor,

formerly Pico Union, was formalized in 2012, though the top four ethnic populations numbered 44.6% (16,892) Mexican, 18.9% (7,180) Salvadoran, 10.4% (3945) Guatemalan, and 9.2% (3483) Korean.[41]

During the annual Korean Parade that was held in conjunction with the four-day 장터 (i.e., 로스엔젤레스 한인축제 Los Angeles Korean Festival) in Koreatown in 2013,[42] a Korean hairdresser whose salon was on the parade route said to me in passing how she could not understand why the Korean community would invest money and time into this area when "it's not even ours [Korean]; it's not Korea. It's America." Even though she had lived in Los Angeles for almost two decades and been a business owner in Koreatown for several years, her comment reflected a sense that she did not feel either herself or other Koreans had the right to claim this space. Her sense of detachment from the space or her own stakeholdership, however, is reflective of how local policies' constructions and implementations often are less on behalf of the communities, but for the benefit of the city elected officials. This sentiment became crystalized during the 2001-2012 city redistricting.

2011-2012 CITY REDISTRICTING: HISTORY REPEATS

Every 10 years, following the census, new maps are drawn on a city, county, and state level. The following is a discussion of the remapping or redistricting of the Los Angeles City Council Districts. Making these maps is a haggard process for Los Angeles, and it is often joked that each district is the shape of some mutated monster. Prior to the 2011 redistricting, Koreatown's 2.7 square miles was split amongst three or four Council Districts depending on definitions of various organizations. This means the communities needed four different city

[41] Based on 2010 Census from Healthycity.org (accessed December 21, 2014)
[42] Its 40th year.

councilmembers' backing to request changes for the area, and it made it difficult to have a representative voting block as a Koreatown community because of the split. This was exemplified after Sa-I-Gu in 1992, when Koreatown stakeholders requested aid from its city councilmembers for "cleanup and recovery effort and [….] members of the City Council […] passed the buck, claiming that the area was a part of another official's district. [….] no legislator [felt] primarily responsible" (Levitt 2010). The Minority Report expressed the problematic issues of the maps that the Commission decided to utilize. As the report states,

> [A]lthough the Commission was presented with several alternative maps from the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, the Korean American Coalition and Commissioner Helen B. Kim, each of which created an Asian influence district with Asian CVAPs [Citizen Voting Age Population] ranging from 31% to 36%, the Final Map Recommendation adopts the opposite approach and effectively splits the densely-populated Korean American community into three Council Districts (CD04, CD 10 and CD13), and places the majority of Korean Americans in CD10. [Its] configuration of CD10 makes the Korean-American community a captive minority, with an Asian voter registration of only 9.2%, as compared to an African-American voter registration of 50.6% (Minority Report and Recommendations of Los Angeles City Council Redistricting Commission 2012:8).

When the remapping process began in 2011, Koreatown stakeholders lobbied to be allotted completely in one district, specifically not in Council District 10, Councilmember Herb Wesson's district. They felt that this would be a reasonable demand especially in light of having its boundaries shrunken in the formalization process and the neighborhood becoming "official" and legitimized under the city council's own constructions of policies and boundaries. In fact, the six maps, mentioned previously, were considered, but the commission, appointed by elected officials, like the mayor and city councilmembers, decided to give weight to the WCKNC boundaries (see figure 6) and the city council's narrowed definition of Koreatown boundaries.

> Not only does the Final Map Recommendation fail to respect the input from these communities, the Final Report even distorts the record on the public input from these communities. For example, the Commission's February 23, 2012 Press Release and the Final Report proclaim that the Final Map Recommendation 'makes Koreatown whole in

> CD10 for the first time in 40 years.' This claim uses the most restrictive Koreatown boundaries used in the City's community renaming process and was seemingly made for the sole purpose of touting the so-called "unification of Koreatown" as one of the major achievements of this Commission and its Final Map Recommendation (Minority Report and Recommendations of Los Angeles City Council Redistricting Commission 2012:2-3).

During the public hearings for the remapping, "activists have accused one of the city councilmembers of ignoring neighborhood needs while treating their area like an ATM." Many Koreatown activists and Korean business owners claimed that, although the council members ask for campaign donations, they rarely fight for the residents of Koreatown (Video from Public Hearing 2012). This was specifically targeted toward Councilman Wesson, whose donations from Koreatown had made up more than one-third of the campaign contributions (equating to about $84k) in the previous year when he was one of four council members for Koreatown.

> Alex Cha stood before the Los Angeles City Council Redistricting Commission last week and told panel members: 'As an Asian American living in the city of Los Angeles, I feel voiceless' (Linthicum 2012).

During the city council hearings, Koreatown activists, many Korean, took to the podium to express their desire to be allotted completely in Council District 13 with Thai Town and Historic Filipinotown. When the Redistricting Commission made the final decision to split Koreatown amongst two districts in 2012, Asian American activists involved argued that the Asian vote had been diluted, even though its population had increased since 2000.

> I am terribly guilt-ridden over the concerns of the Korean community,' said Commissioner David Roberti, who nevertheless voted for the changes that disappointed Koreatown advocates. 'They did not win here and 10 years ago they didn't win either, and I was on that commission as well (Zahniser 2012).

Despite these efforts to mobilize and protest at these hearings, the final proposed map still split Koreatown between 10 and 13, between Herb Wesson and Eric Garcetti (Mitch O'Farrell replaced Garcetti in 2013 when Garcetti became mayor), with Wesson's district having

a larger hold of the neighborhood. Amid accusations of gerrymandering and backroom deals (not just by Koreatown communities), five residents of Koreatown filed a lawsuit in 2012, and it is still in litigation.

Perplexingly, the Koreatown section in the 2002 and 2012 final reports from the Redistricting Commission begin with the same sentence:

> Perhaps the most vexing regional issue that the Commission dealt with had to do with treatment of the Koreatown community and how its current fragmentation among districts could be reduce (LA City Council Redistricting Commission Report 2002).

> Perhaps the most vexing regional issue that the Commission dealt with had to do with the treatment of the Koreatown community and how its current fragmentation among three Council districts, and depending on the definition four districts, could be reduced. (LA City Council Redistricting Commission Report 2012)

The following paragraphs reflect very similar issues and show that the Koreatown communities, particularly Korean and Korean American communities are still held in the same regard—communities that are recognized but rendered invisible or visible by the authorities of the city for the benefit of those authorities. They reflect what Mirzoeff (2011) described: they name, categorize, and define, classifying them (here, through boundaries and Neighborhood Councils), segregating them (here, through redistricting—Koreatown is prevented from joining the Council Districts that hold Thai Town, and other Asian communities), and they naturalize and legitimize their own power through the processes that they designed themselves, creating an *a priori* aesthetic of power. Neither document indicates reasoning for choosing to give weight to one map over the others:

> In truth, however, this Commission failed to unite WCKNC in a single Council District, despite the overwhelming testimony from the Korean-American community and the stakeholders of WCKNC, requesting that the Commission honor the boundaries of WCKNC, which are also identical to the White House "Preserve America" boundaries for Koreatown. The community's request to keep WCKNC intact in CD13 was reflected in all of the map submissions by the Asian American community, including the Asian Pacific American Legal Center and the Korean American Coalition, maps submitted by

> Commissioners Ahn and Kim, as well as petitions submitted by 3056 residents and stakeholders of WCKNC. Moreover, as reported in numerous articles in the press, support for the Koreatown community's request for the WCKNC/Preserve America boundaries to be kept intact in CD13 was overwhelming and made not only by ethnic Koreans, but also ethnic Bangladeshis, Mongolians and Latinos in that community. (Minority Report and Recommendations of Los Angeles City Council Redistricting Commission 2012:2-3)

Thus, when a neighborhood has been visually constructed in a manner exemplified by Koreatown, generates revenues that go toward the city in forms of taxes or campaign donations, yet lacks a commanding political presence (partially due to about 48% of its population being ineligible to vote in city elections), its voice is not heard.

This was exemplified during the 2011-2012 city redistricting. Despite protests and demands of various stakeholders of Koreatown (including the Neighborhood Council) to be kept in one city council district, it was still split between two districts by the Los Angeles City Council Redistricting Commission (members appointed by city councilmembers, the mayor, the city attorney, and the city controller—all city-elected officials). In reality, however, it was split amongst three city council districts: CD 10 (Herb Wesson), CD 13 (Mitch O'Farrell), and CD 4 (then Tom LeBonge, and in 2016, David Ryu). It incited frustration, senses of disenfranchisement, and accusations of gerrymandering and backroom deals, which resulted in a lawsuit that people do not believe will bring change. Some of the present study respondents believed that the lawsuit was a way to assert a different political identity beyond being the "silent" community, to exert overtly their countervisuality rather than only doing it covertly through the everyday, producing a specific space.

The Redistricting Commission, comprising individuals who represent the interests of the elected officials who appointed them, ultimately controlled how and which neighborhoods and communities were rendered for the benefit of the elected officials. For Koreatown, despite the

existence of a neighborhood council, recognized boundaries, existence of multiple official maps (WCKNC, Los Angeles Police Department, and so on), all showing that Koreatown exists on varying and shifting lines, the Commission chose to utilize the map that allowed them to split Koreatown, giving legitimacy to a particular configuration that benefitted the interests of the city councilmembers who wanted to claim it for their benefit. This acts as an example of how the authority (e.g., city council) continuously constructs and reaffirms its power and legitimacy through the processes that its members themselves designed, approved, and legitimized. Imbuing legitimacy over another to the benefit of the entities that already control the maps ultimately becomes a seemingly farcical exercise, but one with concrete and disempowering impact in the communities that are stakeholders in the areas, even when they have been proven to have misrepresented findings to the public in their final reports about what happened at the public hearings, by either stating misleading information or leaving out components (Minority Report and Recommendations 2012).

CONCLUSION

Mirzoeff (2011) discusses at length the ways powerful assertions of authority that simultaneously legitimize that same authority through utilizing maps as an example. Maps often exemplify constructions of realities that are by and for the benefit of the authority. The authority can assert their power to draw the lines on the map, as well as controlling others through a map, wielding visuality to perpetuate their power. This chapter first showed the complexities of the networks of power, in which the city-elected officials, especially the city councilmembers, have immense control over the operations of a neighborhood. Through the example of the 2011-2012 city redistricting, it becomes clear how the structure of governance reinforces the power of the

elected rather than the people. The independent Commission, comprising members appointed by elected officials, were given a task to consider the residents' demands and concerns to draw the new map, but they ultimately worked to represent the political interests of the respective Councilmembers' ability to be re-voted into office. This type of lopsided power dynamics force communities to abide by the realities set by authorities, though they are not the same as their lived experiences, and are more or less told that the space they live, work, and consume, therefore help further construct and sustain, was never theirs anyway. This is further exemplified in the neighborhood boundary formalization processes that changed the shape of Koreatown to become compacted and re-rendered as less expansive, reducing the number of voters and separating voting communities from Koreatown. The network of power that operates on Koreatown controls the space and its shape, creating a struggle for many of the stakeholders in Koreatown in being able harness Koreatown to gain a political voice. Instead, as demonstrated in the examples of development of The Vermont and the 8th on Catalina project, Koreatown as political capital is exploited by the already powerful in the networks of power, especially the city councilmembers, as they sell it piece by piece for their own political gains.

CHAPTER 5: COUNTERVISUALITY – PRODUCING A CLAIMABLE AND CONSUMABLE SPACE

Navigating through Koreatown in Los Angeles is a surreal experience. Like other spaces of ethnic communities, it is often portrayed as the far away, foreign land in our very own backyard. The distance that is often experienced regarding these areas are often primarily due to the language barriers that visitors may face, as many of these spaces are inundated with non-English signs. These types of transnational urban spaces can ultimately play a role as a safe space for the specific ethnic communities because they are able to operate their everyday without being ostracized or feeling foreign for things like the inability to speak English, to earn a living, and to have access to services and goods that are part of their everyday life. The struggle for the power to control urban space is a fight that often results in forms of gentrification, even though critical issues are rooted much deeper than what it may seem.

To shape the space, physically as well as abstractly in the imaginary, is to produce and shape power. In this chapter, I posit that, while many of these often transnational and immigrant communities are often disenfranchised in the proceedings of the City Hall in the exchanging and hoarding of political capital, such communities can have a different mode of power that they could utilize to assert their countervisuality, but in a constant manner, bringing changes in the everyday, rather than something that is abrupt. Countervisuality, according to Mirzoeff (2011), is the right to look, the right to be seen, whereas visuality, as noted in the previous chapter, is the weapon of the authority to dictate reality; hence, countervisuality is the claim to resist the domineering constructions shaped and implemented by the authority through visuality. In other words, if visuality is the hegemonic history or narrative by the powerful, countervisuality is the

counterhistory or counternarrative, resistance by the less powerful. In this chapter, I employ countervisuality to frame the ways in which the disempowered Korean and Korean American communities in Koreatown assert their own right to look, right to be seen, and challenge the visuality of the dominant networks of power. To accomplish this, I focus on signs, urban markers, material goods, services, and events, as well as the WCKNC's 6th Street Project to discuss how a transnational community exerts its countervisuality through the production of a claimable and consumable space.

SIGNS

> Many of the "classic" K-town structures remain grand Victorian-style homes with manicured lawns, art deco buildings, the Wiltern Theatre (playing host to a variety of high-profile and indie rock evening concerts), and charming, but old apartment buildings (Park and Kim 2008:133).

Figure 16. 2013. 28 March. Photo by author. Wilshire Blvd. and Western Ave. intersection, one of the main arteries in Koreatown.

With the concentration of stores with signs in Korean, there is little question that the space is a part of Koreatown. Signage plays a key role in identifying the area as well as for the communities to claim the space. As seen in Figure 17, all of the business signs are predominantly in Korean whereas Figure 18 shows a sign in English indicating a Korean business brand of coffee shops from Korea (Tom N Toms Coffee). This is a common sight all over Koreatown, and indicates a core group of Korean and Korean American business owners and their often Korean and Korean American clientele.

Figure 17. 2013. 12 February. Photo by author. Strip mall on Vermont Ave. and Olympic Blvd. The billboard is an ad, in Korean, of a diet product.

Figure 18. 2013. 28 February. Photo by author. A transit center in one of the main arteries on Western Ave. and Wilshire Blvd. This is the location of a transit center bus and metro stops, which is also the location of mixed-used property with a high-rise luxury condo with stores on the ground floors, such as Tom N Toms Coffee.

As seen below in Figure 19, when media such as television shows attempt to represent Koreatown, they rely heavily on signs in Korean to signal the space, though the actual location of the scene was not necessarily filmed in Koreatown. This reliance on signs also reflects how non-Korean ethnic communities may view Koreatown, where unlike Chinatown in Los Angeles that is often represented through the traditionally styled architecture of the gateways, Korean language signs rather than architecture often symbolize Koreatown.

Figure 19. 2016. 4 March. Screen shot by author. From the television show *Castle*. "I wasn't in Korea, I was in Koreatown, in Los Angeles.[43]"

Transnational urban spaces are sites of consumption serving the needs of its residents and other consumers, not just through providing goods, but also services in Korean as well as signs in Korean that help many of Koreatown's non-English-speaking Koreans to build and navigate a life without feeling disempowered by their lack of English fluency as well as finding comfort of access, at least in terms of language (See Figure 20). These spaces are experienced, utilized, and consumed by everyday stakeholders, which include residents, workers, and patrons, ethnically Korean and non-Korean. These signs not only symbolize the way that the space has been constructed as a space of consumption for a particular community, but they also collectively signal a claim a right to the space for that same community. A more consciously constructed claim to the area can be seen through urban markers that sparsely dot certain areas of Koreatown.

[43] It should be noted that the scene was not filmed in Koreatown, though the sign indicates a used car lot that buys, sells, and leases.

Figure 20. 2013. 12 February. Photo by author. The building's signs show that it comprises mostly medical offices.

URBAN MARKERS

What do urban markers, meant to symbolize an area's ethnic enclave or the space's namesake, signify for the space and its consumption? Such markers signify a certain shift in how Koreatown is marketing itself for a new type of consumption. I am unsure of when there was a shift in the Korean community to primarily using "코리아타운" (Koreatown phonetically written) instead of "한인타운" (literal translation: Koreantown) as the identifying moniker in Korean. The new urban signifiers in the photo below (see Figure 21) reflect how Koreatown is visualizing itself as an area from an internalized space for Koreans to an externalized place Korean culture and cultural materials that welcomes consumers from the highly diverse populations of Koreatown. It also opens itself for visitors, like Disneyland, with signifiers such

as ones shown in the photo below. This shift invites a different type of visual consumption of "Korean" culture and identity before these urban signifiers were erected. What is being consumed in this space? If consumption relies on symbolic exchange value, then these new urban signifiers play an important role in that consumption, but also they are a product of that consumption, as these lampposts, street signs, and symbols embedded into the pavement are part of the hyperreality (Baudrillard 2006) of the newly designated Koreatown.

Figure 21. 2013. 12 February. Photo by author. Koreatown sign, part of the urban markers introduced as part of the Olympic Blvd. Streetscape Project.

The quiet, almost silent introduction of these signs only highlights the artificiality of these symbols to the space, because they are not for the consumption by the Koreans and Korean-Americans of Koreatown; they're not even really for the consumption by the non-Korean

or Korean-Americans of Koreatown. They are for the visitors who have little to no connection to the space itself. However, underneath the urban signifiers, residential buildings, and retail spaces, there exists the inconsumable side of Koreatown that seeks a political voice in Los Angeles City proper.

The installation of the urban makers in Koreatown has meaning beyond what the signifiers tells us. This was a CRA (Community Redevelopment Agency) project discussed at length in an earlier chapter. Even within the Korean American community, it was often critiqued for the amount of money spent ($2.8 million dollars) despite how few blocks it covered. While the signs and the lanterns seem aesthetically fine, in the overall landscape down Olympic Boulevard, the streetscape is very sparsely ornamented and only really highlights each end of the Koreatown boundaries on Olympic Boulevard Still, implementing this in Koreatown is representative of the way that the Korean and Korean American communities have claimed the space, but with the installation, it bolsters their right to be seen. Other ways that strengthens the Korean and Korean Americans' stakeholdership also connect to how the spaces are constructed on the inside as well.

MATERIAL GOODS AND EVENTS

Koreatown's retail and commercial spaces have undergone dramatic and ongoing changes since the 1992 upheaval. And, as discussed in an earlier chapter, a confluence of factors has affected the area, the type of goods, services, and events that have been brought into the area. In this chapter, I will discuss the transnational flow of goods and events to examine how they play a role in building the right to claim Koreatown.

Koreatown, which occupies an expanding area between Hancock Park and downtown,

> may well be the most vibrant expat enclave anywhere in the world, a neighborhood of Korean driving ranges and Korean herbalists, karaoke rooms and supermarkets, movie complexes and modern shopping malls that could have been plucked straight out of Seoul (Gold 2012).

The majority of Koreatown's retail spaces, outside and inside the stores, have signs in Korean. This reflects their intended consumer base (Koreans and Korean Americans) as well as the transition of the immigration population in Koreatown.

Material goods

The material goods that are sold within these sites also provide an insight into the consumers in Koreatown. For example, in Figure 22, the photograph shows a shoe shop with a sign indicating in Korean that they sell shoe inserts that would increase the height of the wearer. The sign, written in Korean, exists for consumers who are Korean-speakers. While it speaks to Korean-speakers, Korean individuals who have issues with their stature are also likely targets. On the other hand, the postcards displayed at the Korean music store in Koreatown Plaza speak volumes in terms of the shift in the consciousness of identifying consumers in Koreatown (See Figure 23).

The postcards are produced by the Korean Cultural Center of Los Angeles. They are a Korean state-run entity located outside of Koreatown. They are mainly meant to promote tourism to Korea to English speakers, as well as aspects of Korean culture, such as food, and tourist-friendly Jeju Island and Pyongchang (which will be the location of the 2018 Winter Olympics). However, the postcard that says "Dok Do" less to do with tourism than with a political statement. Dokdo is a highly contested cluster of rocky islets between Korea and Japan, a source of tension between the two nations. By providing these postcards, there is a push to incorporate a different layer of history into the space. These postcards are generally geared toward English speakers

who may or may not be of Korean descent.

Figures 22 and 23 (From left to right). 2011. December. Photo by author.

As K-pop (Korean pop music) has grown in popularity outside of Korea and its consumption has increased amongst non-Koreans (prior to PSY's "Gangnam Style" in the summer of 2012), the music store is a good place to disseminate these materials. These postcards' purpose goes beyond disseminating tourism information; it works to disseminate a Korean narrative regarding contested geopolitical struggles over Dokdo. Across from the music store, there is also a bookstore with books primarily in Korean (See Figure 24). With the exception of K-pop materials, it is unlikely that it attracts non-Korean speaking customers.

Figure 24. 2013. 22 March. Photo by author. A magazine rack of a Korean bookstore in Koreatown Plaza.

Similarly, Korean supermarkets, like any other specialized market and respective products, are primarily stocked with Korean-brand products: grains, fruits, vegetables, fish, meats, drinks, and more. The layouts of the markets are different from many American markets (e.g., there are sections with live, fresh, and frozen fish, with a variety that is not found in mainstream American markets).

Figures 25 and 26 (From left to right). 2011. December. Photo by author. Supermarkets.

In Figure 25, there is a sign that indicates that Korean street food which would generally be unnecessary to Korean consumers and for some Korean-Americans, who would be aware that the type of products offered are types of Korean street food. Then, for whom do these signs exist? Certainly, these would include non-Korean speakers, as well as individuals who may be unfamiliar with the Korean food culture. In addition, second- and later generations of Korean-Americans may have never experienced these foods in the streets of Korea but are familiar with the foods as well as non-Korean-Americans who may be new to consuming in the Korean and Korean-American space.

These signs not only signal shifting attitudes and approaches by the business owners, but also their acknowledgement that the populations within Koreatown comprise not simply Koreans; in fact, there are multi-generational families, whose younger members may not speak Korean or know much of Korean culture, reflecting the shifting demographics of the area, from

an immigrant-dominant community, to a community composed of populations that have been in the United States for more than 10 years. Though these spaces are distinctly ethnically Korean and Korean American, from layouts to the items that are stocked in the shelves, it is apparent that the consuming base is shifting. Still, as the products offered in these spaces can show, the core communities served are the Koreans and Korean-Americans in and outside of Koreatown. These shifts in attitude by non-Korean or Korean-American consumers are better documented and can be observed in relation to restaurants.

Jonathan Gold, a prominent food writer for *LA Weekly*, observed, "I had been writing about the restaurants for ages, but […] the sheer size and vitality of the scene were even then astonishing" (2011) Korean food is immensely diverse; 김치 (kimchi), a Korean staple, alone has at least 187 documented varieties, depending on the region of origin in Korea (hence the large refrigerated section of Kimchi in the market [See Figure 26]). Koreatown has a plethora of Korean restaurants that represent a variety of regions. However, much of the well-known Korean cuisine is related to meals centering on meats that are grilled (often generalized as Korean BBQ). This is partially due to many of the earlier generations of Korean-restaurant owners focusing on grilled meats—according to some, this was due to their competitive streak and a lack of creativity.

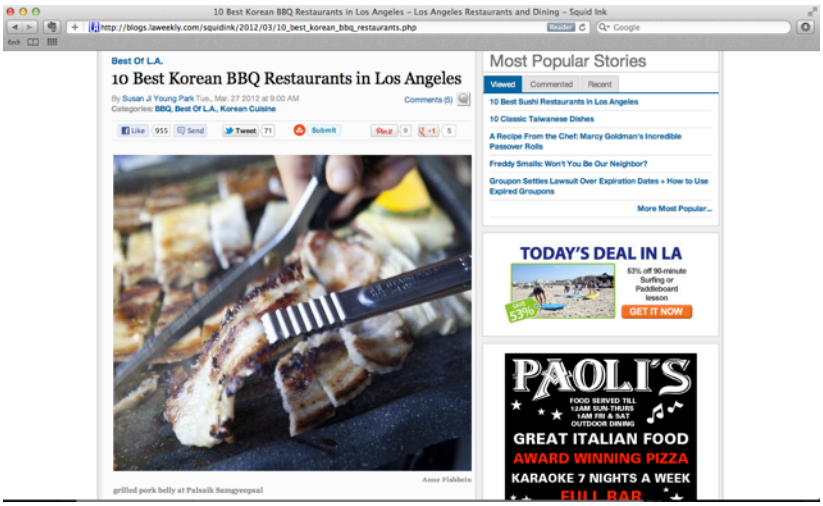


Figure 27. 2012. 13 April. Screen shot by author. "10 Best Korean BBQ Restaurants in Los Angeles," *LA Weekly*. Screenshot taken by author (2012).

However, many food bloggers share their experiences with Korean cuisine beyond the grill, and accompany their commentary with photographs, consuming as well as reproducing their consumption for the masses (see Figures 27-31).

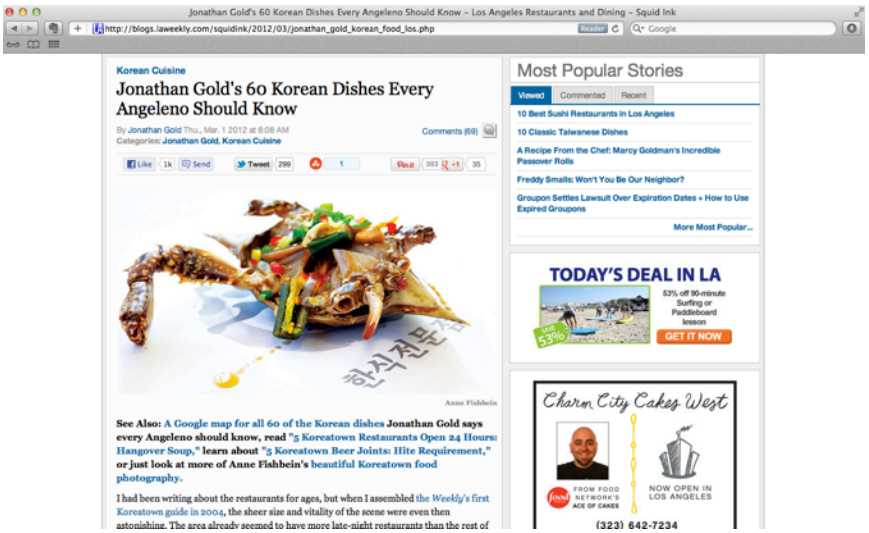


Figure 28. 2012. 13 April. Screen shot by author. From *LA Weekly*. Gold 2012, 1 March.

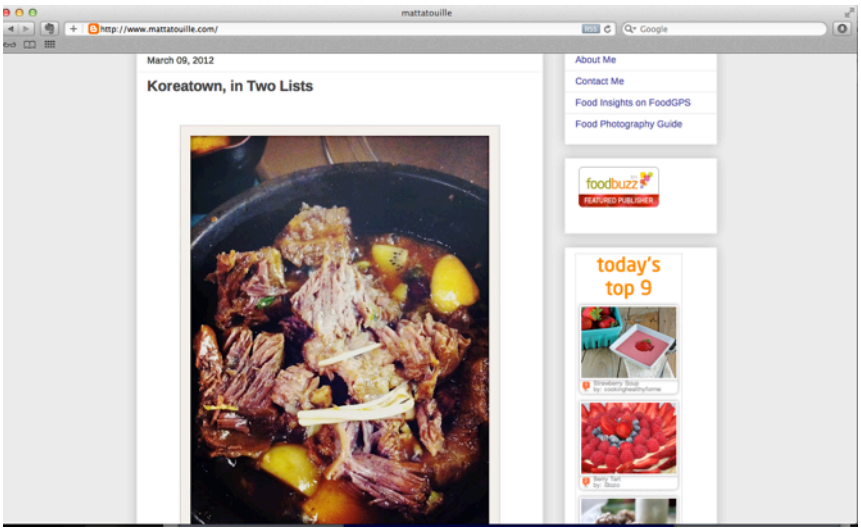
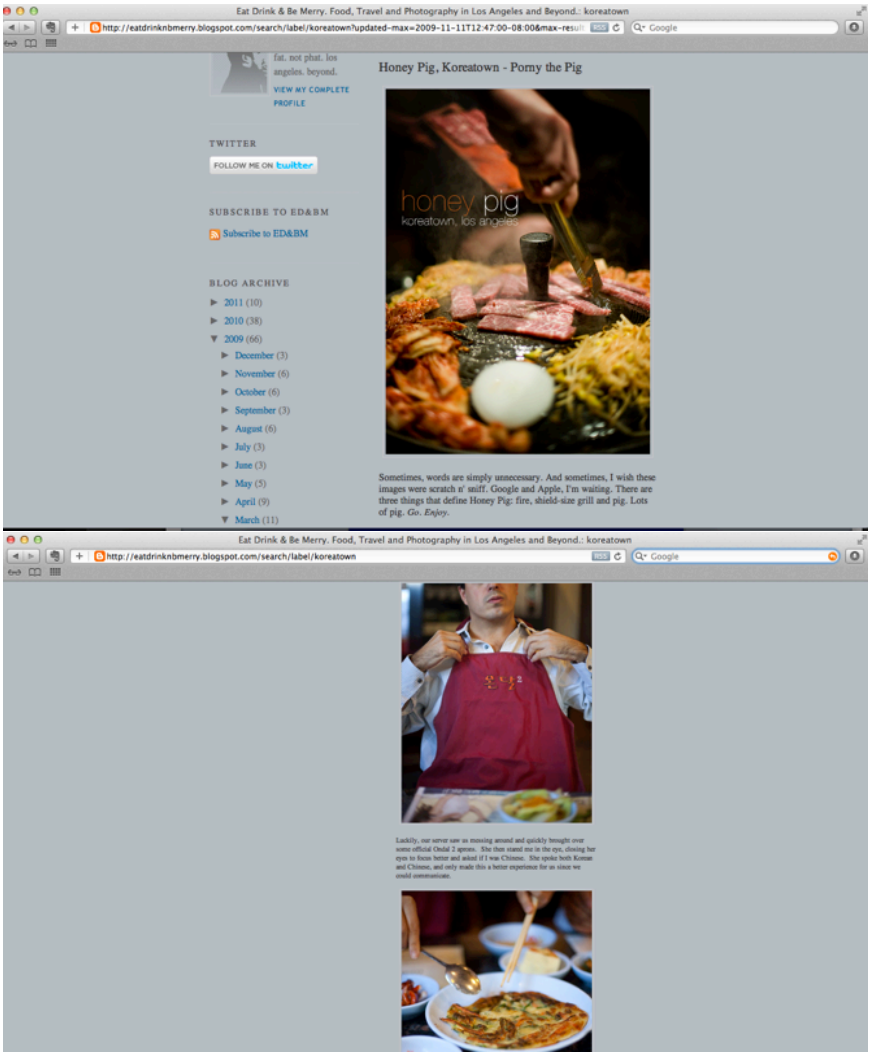


Figure 29. 2012. 13 April. Screen shot by author. From *Mattatouille.com*. 2012, 9 March.



Figures 30 and 31 (From top to bottom). 2012. 13 April. Screen shot by author. Both are from *Eat, Drink, and be Merry*. 2009, 22 March.

The bloggers, as well as Yelp.com, have played a role in making Koreatown a "safe space" for non-Koreans. Even if they happen to be at a restaurant where they have menus in Korean or servers are unable to speak in English, if there is a Yelp review, which are often accompanied by photographs, the customer can show the server the photo of the food to order. The relationship between the bloggers, Yelp, and the customers help facilitate the consumption of Korean goods in Koreatown by non-Korean and often non-Koreatown stakeholder consumers.

Restaurants are one of the most visible sites of consumption in Koreatown. Hence, it becomes meaningful that food critics and bloggers are featuring these spaces, making these sites "safe" spaces for consumers unfamiliar with Korean food culture. They, like the music stores and the markets, show the push and pull of the social construction of the spaces of consumption, in which Koreatown began as a place for Korean immigrants and their families and has grown into a space responding to the diversity of its own community and reconstituting what it means as the "Koreatown" community.

Events

Annual events like the Korea Times Music Festival and Los Angeles Korean Festival, newer events, such as the Koreatown Night Market, and others such as the World Cup and CICLAVIA, all play a role in installing value in the neighborhood, as the fact that they are held in Koreatown acknowledges Koreatown's existence in different ways. While sponsorships of some of these events do include various offices of the City, in essences, these events are developed and operated by community organizations and/or private entities that are mostly rooted in Koreatown or Korean and Korean American communities (e.g., *Korea Times*, one of

the main Korean language newspapers develops and operates the Korea Times Music Festival).

Events such as the Korea Times Music Festival and the Los Angeles Korean Festival are transnational events that began as targeting Korean and Korean American audiences, to opening up more for the rest of Koreatown and Los Angeles. For the Korea Times Music Festival, this has been especially due to an increasing popularity of K-pop, Korean dramas, and Korean films among non-Korean audiences. What is often commonly referred to as Hallyu (meaning Korean Wave) signifies the "phenomenon of Korean entertainment and popular culture rolling over the world with pop music, TV dramas, and movies […] the term was first coined by the Chinese press in the late 1990s to describe the growing popularity of Korean pop culture in China" (korea.net). As the popularity grew in the United States, more non-Koreans began to attend the Korea Times Music Festival.

Figure 32. 2013. 27 April. Photo by author. 2013 Korea Times Music Festival.

I attended its 10th Festival in 2013, where I observed Korean and Korean American attendees of a wide range of ages, as well as non-Korean attendees, who were often young, in their teens. Most of the songs are in Korean, though the co-hosts are often a pair comprising one Korean entertainer (who may be participating in the concert) and one Korean American (who does not seem to be an entertainer or celebrity). At the one I attended, the co-hosts bantered in Korean, and the Korean American would also help translate in English for the audience. At the Festival, a Latino family of four (father, mother, and two twin daughters who were 15 at the time) sat in front of me. During the intermission, I spoke with the father who revealed that they had driven from El Paso, Texas, which took them about 13 hours to drive–. He stated that he and his whole family watched Korean dramas together. When I asked how they found out about K-pop and Korean dramas, he said that his daughters were introduced to K-pop through their friends and YouTube, and eventually expanded their interest to Korean dramas. When I asked why he travelled so far to attend this concert, he said that, although his daughters were interested, there were no concerts or similar events in Texas. He also said that his daughters had found out about this concert so late that he was unable to get better seats (our level was near the middle level) and hoped to be able to prepare better for the following year. He shared that the family wanted to stay near the venue of the Festival, at the Hollywood Bowl, but they had already made a trip to Koreatown because the daughters wanted to go buy their favorite bands' and singers' CDs, DVDs, posters, and other paraphernalia.

The family's interaction with Koreatown provides an insight into the relationship, not only of transnational flow of material and cultural goods, but how Koreatown has developed a role in conjunction with Hallyu and its dissemination into non-Korean audiences. Koreatown, which like many immigrant ethnic enclaves began as a space characterized as a "ghetto,"

dangerous, dirty, as well as foreign (these labels still persist today), is now also a consumable space, a tourist space, as seen in Figure 33, wherein people are taking photos in front of the rumored-soon-to-be K-pop museum to be built by SM Entertainment (see Figure 34), one of the entertainment agency giants in South Korea that houses a large number of K-pop bands.

Figure 33. 2014. 21 June. Photo by author. Two people posing to form a heart in front of the rumored-soon-to-be K-pop museum, below a large billboard of a popular K-pop band, EXO (see next photo).

Figure 34. 2014. 21 June. Photo by author. The billboard the two people were posing under featured a popular K-pop idol band called EXO.

This shift provides and signals a new value and treatment of Koreatown that is coming into fruition, though perhaps not necessarily in the same way as urban markers play a role in creating a consumable ethnic space for visitors. This type of interaction with and consumption of Koreatown is also reflected in the Los Angeles Korean Festival, which local Koreans and Korean Americans refer to as "장터" (meaning "marketplace").

Figure 35. 2013. 28 September. One of the entrances to the 2013 Los Angeles Korean Festival.

The Los Angeles Korean Festival Foundation, a non-profit organization, was founded in 1974 by "leaders of the early Korean-American community with the purpose of keeping their Korean roots planted even after immigrating to the United States" (lakoreanfestival.org). Currently in its 42nd year, the annual festival is held in conjunction with the Korean Fall Harvest holidays, and has become a tool to promote Korean culture to non-Koreans as well as to touch base with multiple generations of Korean and Korean Americans. Many politicians, city, state, federal, including President Barack Obama, sent in letters of support, as did Korean politicians who are representatives of the specific provinces represented by the dozens of booths selling specific goods, mostly food, that are notable from the respective provinces.

On its last day, a Korean Parade (see Figure 36) is held, in which local elected city officials participate, such as the Mayor and the City Councilmember in whose district the

Festival's location falls under. As the organizing foundation states, "With the different cultural communities in Los Angeles […] the Los Angeles Korean Festival does a wonderful job in promoting the Korean culture as well as advocating the cultural diversity, a characteristic that defines the city of Los Angeles is known for" (lakoreanfestival.org). This can be seen in the parade, which is composed of dancers in traditional Korean folk costumes, as well as more common sights of American parades, such as marching bands and parade floats, with politicians, organizers, and other figures of the City. During the parade, the lack of connection between the City Officials and the stakeholders of Koreatown was highlighted; the crowd, relatively quiet and at times unresponsive to the local politicians waving Korean and American flags (see Figures 36 and 37), began to smile and wave when Ronald McDonald (see Figure 38) rode by. Ronald McDonald, admittedly, is a very well-known figure in the United States and perhaps anywhere that has a McDonalds, but for the transnational and immigrant communities present that day, they seemed to be more energized by his presence in the parade than that of the local officials in charge of the areas in which they live, work, and enjoy.

Figure 36. 2013. 28 September. Photo by author. Mayor Eric Garcetti driven in a car in the Korean Parade.

Figure 37. 2013. 28 September. Photo by author. City Councilman and City Council President Herb Wesson, driven in a horse and carriage in the Korean Parade.

Figure 38. 2013. 28 September. Photo by author. McDonalds, as one of several sponsors, had its representative character, Ronald McDonald.

Figure 39. 2013. 28 September. Photo by author. Parade goers watch one of several marching bands.

Figure 40. 2013. 28 September. Photo by author. Children ride in a Pacific City Bank (a Korean-American bank) parade float.

Figure 41. 2013. 28 September. Photo by author. Parade and Festival goers in front of Guelaguetza Mexican Restaurant (building with the mural), which is housed in a structure that emulates traditional Korean architecture, including the roof and the walls.

As discussed in an earlier chapter, the transnational political and promotional activity of Dokdo at the Festival in 2013 is an example of the type of construction of Koreanness that happens at this festival. What also happens at this festival is the participation of dozens of vendors from the different provinces from Korea, artists, musicians, community organizations, as well as local vendors. There were 267 tables set up at the Seoul International Park and on surrounding streets, in front of 다울정 (pronounced Da Wool Jung), also referred to as the Korean pavilion that otherwise stays generally unvisited during most of the year due to the lack of pedestrians in the area. During the Festival, it remains hidden and closed from the public by a gate.

The Festival attendees are a mixed group, though still prominently Korean and Korean

American. The goods sold and other promotions are often representative of specific provinces. There were also booths by artists whose wares were recognized by South Korea's Tourism Department and approved for selling while representing South Korea (see Figures 42 and 43).

Figure 42. 2013. 28 September. Photo by author. Booths of Korean merchants from Korea at the festival.

Many of these goods representing Korea were made of earthenware, along with other more traditional materials, such as inlaid pearl designs. But other booths and tables had items that were less traditional, from cheap jewelry to baseball caps to average clothing. It is generally a well-mixed display of all kinds of goods that are related to Korean and Korean American communities. Booths were also set up for Spanish and Korean speakers to receive free health check-ups and medical help, indicating that both ethnic Korean and Latino communities attend the Festival.

Figure 43. 2013. 29 September. Photo by author. A traditional woodcarver from Korea at the festival.

Figure 44. 2013. 29 September. Photo by author. Attendees at the 2013 Los Angeles Korean Festival.

Figure 45. 2013. 29 September. Photo by author. Attendees at the festival.

Still, the Koreanness of the Festival works toward and ultimately becomes part of how Korean and Korean American communities have claimed Koreatown. Another event, called the CICLAVIA, came through Koreatown in June of 2013, and served a similar role, but from a different origin.

Figure 46. 2013. 23 June. Photo by author. CICLAVIA through Koreatown, on Wilshire Blvd.

Figure 47. 2013. 23 June. Photo by author. During CICLAVIA, people enjoyed the food while sitting in front of Radio Korea.

CICLAVIA is a City-promoted event to reduce traffic by encouraging people to ride bicycles. Miles of streets are car-free for most of the day (see Figures 46 and 47), connecting Downtown Los Angeles to Santa Monica Beach. CICLAVIA goes around Los Angeles to different neighborhoods yearly, and, when they chose Koreatown, it signaled two changes: 1) flow of people all races, many of whom have never been in Koreatown before to explore the area and 2) that Koreatown was now a space that was notable enough, beyond the history of Sa-I-Gu, to be acknowledged as a participating neighborhood. Koreatown community leaders worked to set up booths with a biergarten as well as various types of Korean BBQ and other foods, which, in turn, acted to introduce Koreatown and its consumable materials to new audiences, many of whom would have never ventured to the area.

All together, these examples show how the production of a consumable space can become a claimable space by and for transnational and immigrant communities. Though these communities do not have the same political capital and are unable to harness Koreatown in the same way to bargain for the type of political capital of the more powerful networks of power in the City, they are able to at least accumulate a political voice by producing a claimable space and asserting their countervisuality: the right to look, right to be seen. Still, when considering the dozens of ethnic groups who are also stakeholders of Koreatown, a complication arises for this version of countervisuality. Multifaceted hurdles must be overcome for Koreatown and its various communities to be able to have a more powerful presence in the City, which would be in the form of a unified Koreatown community, which many of my respondents who are community leaders desired to achieve.

6TH STREET PROJECT: WHERE COUNTERVISUALITY REVEALS ITS COMPLEXITY

For the duration of my fieldwork in 2013, I closely followed a committee from the WCKNC (Wilshire Center Koreatown Neighborhood Council) that was working on a "Bring Seoul to 6th Street Project." It was a streetscape project meant to beautify a few sections of 6th street between Vermont Avenue and Mariposa Avenue. The core committee members present at the majority of the public hearings and committee meetings were Yonah Hong, Shawn Kuk, and Gary Benjamin. They hired two landscape architects, Steven Cancian and Hongjoo Kim, to do an initial study of the project to gather feedback from the Koreatown communities and to recommend a project to the rest of WCKNC the type of streetscape project they found to be a direction for to improve the designated blocks. The process of the development of the "Bring Seoul to 6th Street" project exposed the complexities of power dynamics outside of the power structure in City Hall and in the transnational, immigrant, and diverse Koreatown. The struggles that exist for power under various spaces of Koreatown complicate imagining visuality and countervisuality as only a binary, as we consider the way the dozens of communities in Koreatown compete over space and representation.

Figure 48. 2013. 1 July. Photo by author. On 6th St., Steve Cancian gestures while explaining the 6th Street Project for Korean American media outlets. He is facing Hong Joo Kim, Alex Cha (a WCKNC member), and Yonah Hong (a WCKNC member), while Niall Kelly (a WCKNC member) looks on.

Koreatown, as discussed in an earlier chapter and reaffirmed subsequently, is a space that is compact and densely and diversely populated. Thus, what happens when they call a potential Neighborhood Council project "Bring Seoul to 6th Street" as part of a beautification program? It brought out a surprising number of diverse groups of attendees at the first three public meetings. The purpose of the meetings was to get community input into what they needed or would like to see improved on 6th Street that would culminate into some sort of project for the few blocks between Vermont Avenue and Alexandria Avenue The first meetings had good attendance, between approximately 20-25 people, who came to have a say in the development of this project, including a representative of the Oaxacan community, Mongolian, Korean, as well as community organizations such as KYCC (Koreatown Youth Community Center). It was evident that non-

Korean community members were heavily concerned that they were not going to be represented in this project, though, at that point, few decisions had been made.

As Korean Americans dominated the number of seats in WCKNC, the non-Korean stakeholders seemed concerned that they would be rendered invisible in the development of this project, over-powered by the powerful, mostly Korean American, neighborhood councilmembers. As the meetings proceeded, ideas developed, and the participants ultimately settled on a bench project. They wanted to dot 6th Street with artistic benches that could represent Koreatown to increase pedestrian traffic, hoping to capitalize on the large crowds that gather multiple times a week to eat at the popular restaurants up and down 6th Street. When the design of the benches came up for the debate by the third and fourth meetings, many of the people who spoke were no longer attending the meetings and did not attend after.

This was a source of frustration for the WCKNC committee, and I found it an interesting peek into one of the reasons that the "Koreatown community" remains relatively fractured as a neighborhood. People simply do not stay. At one WCKNC meeting I attended, one other person and I were the only ones attending who did not have anything on the agenda. There seems to be varying levels of interest in the communities to participate in these processes, which, in turn, leaves many of the decisions to be made by the members of WCKNC, who are predominantly Korean. My respondents who were part of WCKNC often discussed that they saw the Koreatown community to be composed of multiple ethnicities, yet, as conversations would go on, the focal point of this project became more geared toward fitting the image of Koreatown as Korean, rather than Koreatown as a diverse community.

The 6th Street Project could have been a new foray into bridging the racial and ethnic gaps. However, its own members, outside of the committee, did not attend the hearings either,

though they, like the stakeholders who came to make a statement but left and not return, had strong and various opinions on the project. Still, this is not to say that the WCKNC did not work to bridge racial and ethnic gaps or did not want the project to happen. Though, with a limited budget, these WCKNC members wondered whether or not the project was really worth it at all. One member I interviewed, who was non-Korean, categorized the project as wasteful spending, based on a lack of understanding of what was actually happening at the public and committee meetings, majority of which I had attended and observed. Then, when WCKNC, one of the only outlets for the community to be able to voice its opinion regardless of race, class, or citizenship, to assert a countervisuality to the oppressive and overwhelming power of the City elected officials' visuality, works on the premises of suspicion and lacking participation, how does this impact the rest of the community? When the stakeholders in the community do not participate in the processes of WCKNC, can they truly claim that they have fought for their countervisuality, the right to see and be seen? Ultimately, it leads to an inability to overcome the hurdles that plague nearly every community of color in the United States, unable to accumulate political voice, capital, or power to challenge oppressive and discriminating policies, local or beyond with tangible and positive results.

This example complicates the presumed duality of visuality and countervisuality. It highlights the fracturing that shows itself when communities of the oppressed are not one singular group, but a collection of diverse populations in one space, with varying degrees of privilege and status. Even though there is a sense that stakeholders as well as WCKNC and other community organizations seek a Koreatown countervisuality, it becomes muddled in struggle over wanting to be seen even amongst those who are rendered invisible because of the diversity that is represented in Koreatown. The signs, urban markers, transnational goods and events show

that these are ways build to claim a space: by producing and constructing it to be consumable to non-Koreans, and subsequently building value and power as they are recognized by organizations such as CICLAVIA to be a space that is part of the Los Angeles fabric of neighborhoods.

However, what the 6th Street Project process shows is that there are a multitude of mostly non-Korean communities who feel that they are rendered invisible in Koreatown. It seemed difficult to frame Koreatown beyond Koreans and Korean Americans for many of my respondents. Although they would say in one interview that they absolutely acknowledged and wanted to represent the diversity within Koreatown, they struggle to make it come to fruition in a concrete way because of the namesake. It is not just Koreans and Korean Americans that cannot separate Korean from Koreatown. One respondent who was non-Korean expressed frustration at being unable to come up with a way to be able to let Koreatown be Koreatown, but somehow let the non-Koreans participate without experiencing a sense of oppression, real or perceived.

CONCLUSION

This chapter showed how the production of a claimable and consumable transnational urban space shows a way to gain visibility, as well as some political capital or power, for a space that is often bullied and taken advantage of due to its composition and division among its stakeholders, who are also considered less valuable due to their race, class, and citizenship in the context of city politics. Through the photographs, I hoped to let the reader visually witness and experience the ways in which this production of a claimable and consumable space was occurring through examples of signs, urban markers, material goods and events, and WCKNC's 6th Street Project. With these examples, I wanted to show the connections between how the space is utilized by some of its consumers and how Koreatown has shifted from Koreantown to

Koreatown. I also wanted to highlight the continuous struggle for the stakeholders as well as community-oriented organizations like the WCKNC to gain political voice, capital, or power.

Additionally, together, these examples complicate an understanding of visuality and countervisuality because they show that, within diverse transnational and immigrant communities living in one space, there is competition to assert a respective countervisuality, which ultimately stalls and hinders the ability for any of these communities to be able to harness or even accumulate their own political power, which, in turn, only bolsters the power of the existing authority of the City.

To fully bring change to the uneven power dynamics through asserting countervisuality in Koreatown, it seems that a balance must be struck, between Koreatown and the Korean identity of Koreatown. While it cannot be ignored that a large part of Koreatown's value is its Korean identity and history, it does not mean that Korean and Korean American communities' concerns would or should have continuous primacy. A unified Koreatown community, rather than communities that happen to live in Koreatown, would make elected officials listen to the community's concerns with more gravitas, as they often do with better unified neighborhoods. The space as a whole can be harnessed for the Korean and Korean American communities, as well as while being part of a unified Koreatown community.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Figure 49. 2013. 1 March. Photo by author. A street building number marker on a curb on Western Ave., exhibiting the flags of the United States and South Korea. These types of markers can be found sporadically around Koreatown.

The construction of the Koreatown, Los Angeles is both the result and has potential to be the catalyst for production of power for its transnational and immigrant communities as well as for other, often more dominant, networks of power that are able to harness it. Visuality and countervisuality influence the development of these contentious relationships. By incorporating perspectives of globalization and the treatment of cities under globalization with perspectives on visual social processes and examinations of operations of power in the context of visual social processes, a theoretical lens emerges, allowing for a more robust understanding of the processes between construction of transnational urban spaces and production of power.

The construction of space and production of power has a dialectical relationship in which it is continuously shifting and overlapping, and in Koreatown, its processes are further intensified by the transnational and immigrant communities' struggles to find footing on the

local political arena's threshold. Tracing the transnational history of Korean migration and the transnational political activities reveal that the Korean and Korean American communities and Koreatown was constructed and is continuously, and simultaneously impacted by these moments and movements. Simultaneously, Koreatown, as a space, molds these transnational political activities, shaping and influencing more recent demonstrations and rallies.

Through development projects and boundary constructions in Koreatown, networks of power assert visuality in Koreatown, controlling how it is rendered and experienced. Visuality (Mirzoeff 2011) is the tool through which the authority produces, harnesses, exerts, and claims power. It allows the authority to control who can see, who is seen, how, when and where they are seen. In the case of Koreatown, the powerful, especially the city elected offices, has immense control over the space, constructing, implementing, and changing policies flexibly, but often against the benefit of the communities of Koreatown. This became apparent by how parcels of Koreatown had been sectioned and given to developers as a return for a former or future campaign financial support, which have changed not only the physical space but is displacing existing low-income residents of Koreatown.

The development project examples exemplify how even though the value of Koreatown may reside in the development of its Korean identity, that it is the elected officials who are able to wield Koreatown as political capital to exchange for political gains. The control exerted over boundaries divulges how the powerful authority have physically rendered Koreatown smaller, in effect reducing the size of the communities, which in turn affect their abilities to fight for their right to look and the right to be seen. The uneven formations of the power dynamics for the communities of Koreatown are results of the assertion of visuality, as exemplified in the implementations of luxury real estate development projects as well as government processes

such as neighborhood boundary formalizations and city redistricting. In being able to control the redistricting maps, redrawing of boundaries, and inserting development projects, the authority (e.g., city council) continuously constructs and reaffirms its own power and legitimacy through the processes that its members themselves designed, approved, and legitimized. This however, creates a lopsided power dynamic in which disenfranchised communities have to contend with in order to fight for their right to see and right to be seen.

The transnational and immigrant communities such as the Korean and Korean American communities seek to assert their countervisuality to Koreatown to obtain a political voice. Countervisuality (Mirzoeff 2011) is the counternarrative of the less powerful. It is the right to look, the right to be seen, and to regain control of how the visual field is constructed. The communities in Koreatown struggle against the more powerful networks that operate in Koreatown, but the transnational and urban space itself gives them a different source of power to energize their fight for countervisuality. Analyzing the role of signs, urban markers, material goods and events, as well as the streetscape project by the WCKNC illustrate how the constant constructions of Koreatown as a consumable space can lead to Koreatown as a claimable space, which then can help build a political platform for the community. Koreatown is political capital for these communities, though differently than it is for the city elected officials or other networks of power. The production of power in these constructions are not the same in form or strength as the power that the city officials, for example, can harness, but it can help communities to empower themselves by understanding how asserting their own narratives to fight for their right to look and be seen can challenge the power of the authority.

Countervisuality and visuality do not necessarily work as binaries as Mirzoeff (2011) suggests. The conceptualization of countervisuality is complicated by acknowledging the

tensions between transnational and international communities of color in Koreatown. In his discussion of visuality and countervisuality (Mirzoeff 2011), ultimately there are two types of groups – the powerful and powerless, the oppressors and the oppressed. However, when transnational and immigrant communities of color are considered as actors and part of the subjects of study, the binary of powerful and powerless become muddier, becoming even more stratified, and intersections of race, class, and citizenship cannot be ignored. This project challenges the idea that understanding power dynamics through binaries does disservice to the disenfranchised in several ways. Though part of the discourse of visuality and countervisuality centers around the agency and power of the oppressed asserting countervisuality against the oppressors, by painting disenfranchisement in a broad stroke creates and avoidance of the complicated intersections of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and citizenship. What it means to be an immigrant is not necessarily the same as being an immigrant who is saddled with the added burden of the label of American conceptualizations of race. The various transnational and immigrant communities within Koreatown exemplify these complex relationships, requiring a conversation that is often categorized as the oppressed and the oppressors.

The findings further support the embedded theoretical frame and contribute to the empirical literature in the field of sociology. There is a shift in harnessing transnationality of communities to gain political voice in the local spaces they occupy. This necessarily challenges how transnational and immigrant, specifically Korean and Korean American, communities are framed and approached. Mired in new forms of the city and technologies, and in the spaces they occupy, and the communities are disenfranchised by the political system and left voiceless due to their race, class, or citizenship. The concerns of these communities no longer just reside in language barriers, access to services, churches, and finding or building an ethnic network; the

literature must also recognize how the people of these communities who hold multiple cultural, transnational, and social identities contend with navigating local (city) politics as it affects their everyday. The transnationality of their lives should not limit the framing of these processes. Much more is needed to understand their stakeholdership or "city-zenship," because transnational and immigrant spaces and communities are in a disenfranchised positions, often based on race, class, and citizenship, and the value of being able to exercise stakeholdership or city-zenship can improve the quality of everyday life (e.g., demanding a green space instead of luxury condominiums). The experiences of these communities are not necessarily the same as those natively born in the United States even though they may experience difficulties often based on similar racist and classist policies that dictate their everyday. The treatment of their stakeholdership is an examination worth expanding, which will help develop a more robust treatment of transnational urban spaces beyond categorizing them as only "foreign" or "ethnic" spaces. Additionally, there should be further consideration of a role of visual social processes in sociological inquiry, as this study demonstrates that what we see is not superficial or merely passing information, but has reverberating affects that may not be immediate, but are nonetheless powerful and long lasting. Analyzing these transnational urban spaces without understanding how they are visually experienced and harnessed could have left unrecognized, the value of how the space has been constructed by transnational and immigrant communities, and how that could lead to a production of their political power.

Together, the chapters highlight Koreatown as a constantly shifting transnational urban space. Transnationality that shapes and permeates through the space is in turn shaped and perpetuated by the local constructions of the space. This relationship allows Koreatown to shift from just a consumable space to a claimable space, a distinction that opens a platform for Korean

and Korean American communities to begin to assert a claim to the space, and to be able to develop a more situated political voice. Still, the modicums of political gains thus far are not as many or powerful as they could be, because they lack a robust voice that is inclusive of the rest of the communities of Koreatown. Though the diverse agendas have thus been a hindrance in the possible progress, the diversity of the communities of Koreatown could be a boon instead because Koreatown is the most densely populated area in Los Angeles. Ideally, if that population could be unified for the interests of developing the space of Koreatown for it to become a livable and affordable neighborhood, it could be an incredible force to assert a Koreatown countervisuality in city politics.

Figure 50. 2013. 28 September. Photo by author. A festival attendee with a #KTOWN sticker on his back during the 2013 Los Angeles Korean Festival.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS

International Student Resource Center (ISRC)
Korean American Coalition – Los Angeles (KAC)
Korean American Democratic Committee (KADC)
Korean American Federation of Los Angeles (KAFLA)
Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA)
Koreatown Youth Community Center (KYCC)
My One Vote (MOV)
Wilshire Center Koreatown Neighborhood Council (WCKNC)
한국사회연구모임 **(Korean Society Research Group)**

APPENDIX B

LIST OF ARCHIVAL MATERIAL RESOURCES (ONLINE AND OFFLINE)

***Central Daily* (중앙일보)**
Dorothy Peyton Gray Transportation Library
***The Korea Times* (한국일보)**
The Los Angeles Times
University of Southern California East Asian Library

APPENDIX C

LIST OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Participant #	Date of Interview	Category	Gender
1	2/20/13	Business	M
2	3/24/13	Business	M
3	5/9/13	Community Org	F
4	6/5/13	Community Org	M
5	6/12/13	Community Org	M
6	6/13/13	Community Org	M
7	6/19/13	Community Org	M
8	6/19/13	Community Org	M
9	6/25/13	Community Org	M
10	6/25/13	Community Org	F
11	6/25/13	Community Org	F
12	6/25/13	Community Org	M
13	6/25/13	Community Org	F
14	6/26/13	Community Org	F
15	6/27/13	Community Org	M
16	6/30/13	Community Org	M
17	7/5/13	Community Org	M
18	7/10/13	Community Org	M
19	7/10/13	Community Org	M
20	7/11/13	Community Org	F
21	7/13/13	Community Org	M
22	7/14/13	Community Org	F
23	7/15/13	Community Org	F
24	7/17/13	Community Org	M
25	7/19/13	Community Org	F
26	8/2/13	Community Org	F
27	8/5/13	Community Org	M
28	8/9/13	Community Org	M
29	8/12/13	Business	M
30	8/13/13	Community Org	M
31	9/30/13	Community Org	F
32	12/17/13	Business	F

APPENDIX D

PROTOCOL FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Do you live in Koreatown? (If yes) Why or (if not) why not?
How long have you been aware of Koreatown?
Can you describe the earliest memory you have of Koreatown?
Do you consider yourself part of a community in Koreatown? Can you explain? How? Or Why not?
Have you been in other Koreatowns?
Which ones in which cities? And how do they compare to the one in Los Angeles?
Do you have a favorite place in Koreatown? Where? Can you describe it to me?
Why is it a favorite place? How did it become a favorite place?
How would you describe your [group/store/agency]'s relationship to Koreatown?
Is there a strong relationship with communities in Koreatown?
Does the [group/store/agency] play a role in Koreatown?
In what capacity? Can you explain?
How do you see the dynamic between [group/store/agency] and Koreatown? Why?
Do you live in Koreatown? (If yes) Why or (if not) why not?